In the Footsteps of The Master

BORGONGINI DUCA

SPELLMAN

In the Footsteps of The Master

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by the authors of "The Word of God"
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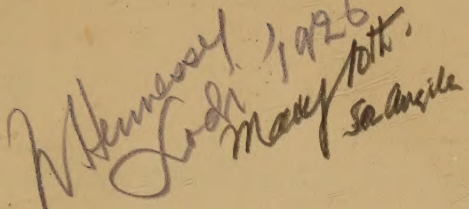

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WILLIAM CARDINAL O'CONNELL
Archbishop of Boston.

Dear Father Spellman —

I am glad to welcome a second volume of Mgr. Borgongini's sermons. For their depth, unction and fervor they may well serve as models of good preaching.

I wish the volume every success and a large circle of readers.

W Card O'Connell
Abp Boston

June 11, 1924.

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FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT

LIBERATION

"At that time, Jesus said to His disciples: There shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars: and upon the earth distress of nations, by reason of the confusion of the roaring of the sea and of the waves, men withering away for fear and expectation of what shall come upon the whole world. For the powers of heaven shall be moved; and then they shall see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with great power and majesty. But when these things begin to come to pass, look up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is at hand. And He spoke to them a similitude: See the fig-tree, and all the trees: when they now shoot forth their fruit, you know that summer is nigh; so you also, when you shall see these things come to pass, know that the kingdom of God is at hand. Amen I say to you, this generation shall not pass away till all things be fulfilled. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My words shall not pass away." Luke xxi, 25-33.

IN the midst of the various trials of life, we all have need of comfort. "In whichever direction we turn," says Saint Augustine, "we are tormented by fears, anxieties, tribulations, temptations and scandals. The only way that we can secure consolation is to direct our thoughts to God."

At the beginning of Advent, the Church prepares for the coming of the Saviour. At this time of the year, our Holy Mother has a special message for us all, a message for all who are sufferers in this vale of tears, for all of us who are battling bravely for salvation. "Courage!" the Church seems to tell us. "Do not be dismayed even though your pains be many and severe; do not tremble even though afflictions and temptations prove most violent. Put your confidence in God

and raise your eyes aloft towards Him. The day of your deliverance is near at hand."

The day of our deliverance! God speed it! Let us not, however, permit the intervening time to pass in idleness or dreaming. If we are to secure the crown of life, it is essential for us to bear in mind that we must fight for it. And, strange to say, with success the battle waxes fiercer. As our strength increases, so also grow the enemy's battalions. The violent character of the assaults, however, indicates that we are about to receive the rewards of merit. We should, therefore, take courage. The very bitterness of the attacks should reassure us. Our defence will not be weakened. On the contrary, the attacks which we sustain shall stiffen our resistance. They show that Jesus counts us among the number of His dearest and closest friends. They show that Christ can depend on us and can enroll us in the ranks of His most valiant army. Soon we shall appear before Him in review. He is coming to reward us for our service. He is coming to place the crown of glory upon our brows. He is coming to change our griefs and troubles into joys and consolations, and the day of His coming is near.

* * *

In the twenty-seventh chapter of the first book of the "Little Flowers of Saint Francis," there is an interesting story of Brother Rinieri. Some time after his entrance into the Franciscan Order, Brother Rinieri was tormented by a most severe temptation. Neither prayer nor fasting nor the discipline banished this temptation from his mind. Brother Rinieri was on the verge of despair, for he thought that God had abandoned him. Finally, he decided to go to confide in Saint Francis, for he said within himself, "If the saint receives me kindly, it will indicate that God in His mercy will save me."

Saint Francis was at this time gravely ill. He was, however, inspired by the Lord, and he became aware of Brother Rinieri's journey to see him. He called Brother Leo and Brother Masseo to his bedside and told them to go to meet Brother Rinieri, to greet him in his name, and to bid him welcome. When the Brothers in the name of Saint Francis received him with great cordiality, Brother Rinieri's heart beat fast with joy. Fervently thanking God for this blessing, he hastened to the room where Saint Francis was lying. The saint raised himself from his bed of suffering, and although he was weak unto death as a result of the burning fever which had all but consumed his life, he was able to embrace Brother Rinieri in affectionate welcome. "My dearest son," said Saint Francis, "above all the brothers in the whole world I esteem you in a singular way." Saint Francis then explained to the Brother that God had permitted this trial in order that he might receive greater merit in the life which was to come.

"Arise in Thy might, we beseech Thee, O Lord, and come; that by Thy protection we may be rescued from the dangers which threaten us because of our sins, and by Thy deliverance attain salvation." [1]

[1] Prayer in the Mass.

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FEAST OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY.

OUR INTERCESSOR.

"The angel Gabriel was sent from God into a city of Galilee, called Nazareth, to a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin's name was Mary. And the angel being come in, said unto her: Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with thee; blessed art thou among women." Luke I, 26-28.

AS we meditate on the Immaculate Conception of the Mother of God, the inspired words of the royal Psalmist come to our minds. King David is grieving at the corruption of man and is yearning for the coming of the Saviour. "The fool hath said in his heart, 'There is no God,'" said King David. "They are corrupt, and are become abominable in their ways: there is none that doth good, no not one. The Lord hath looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there be any that understand and seek God. They are all gone aside, they are become unprofitable together. There is none that doth good, no not one. Their throat is an open sepulchre. With their tongues they acted deceitfully. The poison of asps is under their lips. Their mouth is full of cursing and bitterness. Their feet are swift to shed blood.—There is no fear of God before their eyes.—They have not called upon the Lord.—For the Lord is in the just generation. You have confounded the counsel of the poor man, but the Lord is his hope. Who shall give out of Sion the salvation of Israel? When the Lord shall

have turned away the captivity of His people, Israel shall rejoice and Israel shall be glad." [1]

This clear prophecy of the Psalmist has now been fulfilled. The Lord has "turned away the captivity of His people." After the sin of our first parents had wounded in its very root the human family, the children who were born into the world carried in their souls and in their bodies the marks of this degradation. Paradise was transformed into a gloomy and desolate place. The world became an assemblage of men condemned to die.

God in His mercy, however, wished to redeem mankind. He wished to buy back for man the heavenly kingdom which he had lost, and God the Son, the Second Person of the Most Blessed Trinity was to become incarnate for this purpose. In the eternal designs of His providence, God decreed that a most humble virgin was to become the Mother of His Son. She was to be the instrument by which our redemption would be accomplished. And so, from the very moment of her conception, Our Blessed Lady was preserved from the contagion of sin. It would in nowise have been fitting for the Mother of God to be even for a single instant tarnished by the slightest stain of sin.

Then, indeed, occurred the most luminous moment in the story of the human race. Then, for the first time, a flower of immaculate purity blossomed in the contaminated soil of this world. Mary became our Queen, the Mother of our Eternal King. God made the Blessed Virgin the dispenser of His favors, and she delights in showering His gifts upon us. It is true that our spirits tend constantly upwards towards the light, but it is also true that our heavy, ponderous bodies drag us down. Mary is anxious to assist us in the struggle, and

[1] Psalm xiii.

it is, therefore, with supreme confidence that we appeal to her for her help. No cry comes more spontaneously from our hearts than the name of Mary. No word sounds sweeter on our lips than this holy name. She is the Mother of the world's Redeemer, and, therefore, the spiritual mother of the world's redeemed.

O Mary, Our Mother, pray for us, thy children; pray for us who are sinners. O thou, Immaculate Virgin, save us from ourselves! Deliver us from the powers of darkness. With all the fervor of loving hearts, with all the confidence of trusting children, we stretch forth our arms to thee. We know that our Mother will save us.

* * *

We may read in the Book of Esther that during the reign of Assuerus as king of Persia a certain minister of the king had secured the publication of an edict decreeing the massacre of every Jew that dwelt in the kingdom. Only one daughter of this unhappy race was to be spared, and this was Esther. Assuerus, who is known in history as Xerxes I, had been impressed with the virtue and beauty of Esther and had made her his queen. When Esther learned of the edict, she resolved to do everything in her power to save her people from destruction. For three days, she prayed and fasted, and finally she ventured to present herself before the king. "If I have favor in thy sight, O king," sobbed Esther, "and if it please thee, give me my life for which I ask, and my people for which I request. For we are given up, I and my people, to be destroyed, to be slain, and to perish. And would God we were sold for bondmen and bondwomen; the evil might be borne with, and I would have mourned in silence; but now we have an enemy whose cruelty redoundeth upon the king." [1]

Assuerus was angry at the deceit which had been prac-

[1] Esther vii, 3, 4.

tised upon him, and the unjust minister was punished. The edict was revoked, and "to the Jews a new light seemed to rise." [1] "And in all peoples, cities, and provinces, whithersoever the king's commandments came, there was wonderful rejoicing, feasts and banquets, and keeping holy day, insomuch that many of other nations and religion joined themselves to their worship and ceremonies." [2]

The goodness and the power of Queen Esther are faint symbols of the goodness and the power of Mary. Dante, in his "Paradise," has directed these memorable words to the Blessed Virgin: "In thee is mercy and kindness! In thee, magnificence! In thee is united everything of goodness in creatures!"

"Grant, O merciful God, Thy protection to our frailty, that we, who observe the festival of the Immaculate Conception of the Mother of Thine only-begotten Son, may, by the aid of her intercession, rise from our iniquities." [3]

[1] Esther viii, 16.

[2] Esther viii, 17.

[3] Postcommunion in Mass of the Vigil of the Feast of the Immaculate Conception.

SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT.

MORTIFICATION.

"At that time, when John had heard in prison the works of Christ: sending two of his disciples, he said to Him: Art Thou He that art to come, or do we look for another? And Jesus making answer, said to them, Go and relate to John what you have heard and seen. The blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead rise again, the poor have the Gospel preached to them; and blessed is he that shall not be scandalized in Me. And when they went their way, Jesus began to say to the multitudes concerning John, What went you out into the desert to see? a reed shaken with the wind? But what went you out to see? a man clothed in soft garments? Behold they that are clothed in soft garments are in the houses of kings. But what went you out to see? a prophet? yea, I tell you, and more than a prophet. For this is he of whom it is written (in the Prophecy of Malachias), Behold I send My angel before Thy face, who shall prepare Thy way before Thee." Matthew xi, 2-10.

ON the banks of the River Jordan, sounds the first announcement of the coming of Christ. The herald of this joyful news is a pale ascetic who has passed long years of exile in the desert. He has lived apart from the companionship of men. He has occupied himself entirely in prayer, in fasting, and in the practice of austerities of other kinds. Great crowds have come down to the side of the river in order to see this prophet and to hear his words.

His message is brief, but it teaches a wonderful lesson. "Do penance, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand," [1] is the bidding.

These words of Saint John the Baptist merited the praise

[1] Matthew iii, 2.

and the endorsement of the Saviour. They inculcate the same lesson which Christ Himself consistently taught,—that those who save their souls must practise penance and self-denial. It is impossible for us not to be aware of this truth. It is impossible for us not to know that the road to heaven is the road of mortification.

The Christian must conquer himself. All other victories and triumphs have their inevitable culmination in defeat if one's own self has not been vanquished.

All of us have vast potentialities for wrongdoing. All of us experience at one time or another the tremendous urge of passion. If we do not habitually and insistently strive to subdue our evil impulses, we discover to our sorrow that we are cast in dangerous situations. A steed wildrunning quickly jumps all barriers. On our success in bridling and in curbing the steeds of passion depends our eternal happiness. We must be careful of our language; we must be temperate in our appetites; we must closely guard all our senses.

We must cheerfully bear the various crosses and endure the different trials which beset our pathway home. These crosses and trials are really graces and blessings. We must convince ourselves that every tear we shed for love of Jesus transforms into another pearl for the crown that we shall receive on our entrance into life.

* * *

Saint Francis was suffering intense pain from some malady which affected his vision. On his way from Assisi to Rieti, his illness became so acute that he was obliged to rest in the Monastery of Saint Damian. He was no longer able to distinguish light from darkness. The pains became so severe that he could sleep neither day nor night. He passed his time in meditating on his sins and gladly welcomed his sufferings

as a punishment for them and as a penance. He thanked God with all his heart for this visitation and prayed aloud, saying, "My Lord, I deserve these pains and, in fact, I deserve more severe ones. Grant me the grace, O Lord, I pray Thee, that this illness shall draw me closer to Thee." As Saint Francis prayed, he heard a voice which told him that he did well to be contented, for this sickness was in truth a pledge to him that he would receive the gift of eternal life.

These words from the nineteenth chapter of the first book of the "Little Flowers of Saint Francis" are intended not alone for the Seraph of Assisi. They have a meaning which is clear also to us. Grief is indeed an inexhaustible fountain of merit. There is no better way for a Christian to prepare for the birthday of Christ than by the humble and cheerful acceptance of his crosses.

"Inspire our hearts, O Lord, to prepare the ways of Thine only-begotten Son, that through His coming we may be worthy to serve Thee with purified minds." [1]

[1] Prayer in the Mass.

THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT.

THE VOICE IN THE WILDERNESS.

"At that time, the Jews sent from Jerusalem priests and Levites to John, to ask him, Who art thou? And he confessed, and did not deny; and he confessed, I am not the Christ. And they asked him, What then? Art thou Elias? And he said, I am not. Art thou the prophet? And he answered, No. They said therefore unto him, Who art thou, that we may give an answer to them that sent us? What sayest thou of thyself? He said, I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord, as said the prophet Isaias. And they that were sent were of the Pharisees. And they asked him, and said to him, Why, then, dost thou baptize, if thou be not Christ, nor Elias, nor the prophet? John answered them, saying, I baptize with water; but there hath stood one in the midst of you Whom you know not; the same is He that shall come after me, Who is preferred before me, the latchet of Whose shoe I am not worthy to loose. These things were done in Bethania, beyond the Jordan, where John was baptizing." John i, 19-28.

JUST as Saint John the Baptist repeated the words of the prophet Isaias to the Jewish priests and the Levites, so does the Church today make use of the same words to prepare her children for the coming of Christ,—"Make straight the way of the Lord." [1]

Jesus wishes to come into our hearts at Christmas time. He is our all-merciful Redeemer, our all-powerful Liberator, and He wishes to free us entirely from the bondage of sin. He is our Comforter and He desires to provide us with the consolation of His divine companionship in all the trials which befall us.

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[1] John i, 23.

It is, however, necessary for us to prepare to receive Him. It is necessary for us to show our good will. This may mean the avoidance of an occasion of sin and the separation from a danger which may involve some pain.

God will, however, generously compensate us for any sacrifice which we may make in His behalf. He will shower down upon us a superabundance of spiritual consolations which can not fail to bring peace and joy to our souls.

" 'Be comforted, be comforted, my people,' saith your God. 'Speak ye to the heart of Jerusalem, and call to her, for her evil is come to an end, her iniquity is forgiven; she hath received of the hand of the Lord double for all her sins. The voice of one crying in the desert: Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the wilderness the paths of our God.' " [1]

God will not be outdone in generosity. If we prepare well for His coming, He will in turn be lavish with His gifts to us. If we really desire Him as our Guest, there is no doubt that He will come.

Saint Augustine has written that the life of a good Christian consists in one continual longing for God. "Let your ambitions be great," exclaimed Saint Theresa, "persuading yourselves that with the aid of God and with perseverance you can finally reach the home where dwell the saints." God rewards those who make firm decisions and who give evidence that they are earnestly desirous of cooperating with His graces.

The most important thing is to take the first step and to take it now. God is waiting for this. We must not delay, for "he who hesitates is lost." The weakling does not deserve to be helped. He is the type who irresolutely stammers, "I would wish," for he lacks determination to proclaim cour-

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[1] Isaias xl, 1-3.

ageously, "I will." Such a man is not worthy to become a soldier of Christ, for membership in Christ's army presupposes character, prompt obedience and heroism.

* * *

There is a story told of two noblemen who had occasion to visit a monastery during the course of a journey. They came from the thriving central city of the kingdom to this quiet, secluded religious house. Various plans and preoccupations concerning the improvement of their social position and their financial standing were in their minds. These thoughts contrasted sharply with the spirit of the house where they were guests, for the chief concerns of their hosts were meditation and prayer. An atmosphere of religious fervor pervaded all the monastery.

One of the noblemen was so impressed by the glimpse of the religious life, a life which had previously seemed to him unattractive, that he began to read the reflections of Saint Anthony the Abbot. Saint Augustine tells us that as the nobleman read this work and became interested in the meditations of the holy man of God, the idea of a religious life began to appeal to him. He began to see that his ambitions for material success and worldly honors were just a bit inordinate. Finally he exclaimed to his companion, "What are we seeking at court? It is impossible for us to achieve any greater success than to become friends of the king. And even if our hopes are realized and we are finally received into the inner circle, how uncertain, at the very best, will be our lot! We shall always be in danger of falling into disfavor. On the other hand, if we choose to become friends of God, we may enjoy His friendship at once and we are sure of remaining God's friends as long as we are faithful to Him."

This story has an especially appropriate lesson in connection with the Gospel for this Sunday. It emphasizes the

necessity of preparing our souls for the coming of God. It insists on the point that if we truly want God to come to us, God will certainly grant our request. He is only awaiting our invitation.

"Incline Thine ear to our prayers, O Lord, we beseech Thee, and bring light to the darkness of our minds by the grace of Thy visitation." [1]

[1] Prayer in the Mass.

FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT.

WISDOM AND FOLLY.

"In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judea, and Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, and Philip his brother tetrarch of Iturea and the country of Trachonitis, and Lysanias tetrarch of Abilina, under the high priests Annas and Caiphas; the word of the Lord came to John the son of Zachary, in the desert. And he came into all the country about the Jordan, preaching the baptism of penance for the remission of sins; as it is written in the book of the sayings of Isaias the prophet: A voice of one crying in the wilderness: Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight His paths. Every valley shall be filled; and every mountain and hill shall be brought low: the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough ways plain, and all flesh shall see the salvation of God." Luke iii, 1-6.

"AND all flesh shall see the salvation of God." [1] When Christ came on earth, the true character and the correct meaning of wisdom became apparent. Before the coming of Christ, men thought that wisdom consisted in the acquisition of riches and of honors, and that it was the part of wisdom to seek diversion in pleasures.

When Christ came, He showed that self-denial, humiliation and poverty are steps in the only staircase which leads to true peace and perfect happiness. For it is written, "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and the prudence of the prudent I will reject." [2] "Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?" [3]

1Luke iii, 6.
2I Corinthians i, 19.
3I Corinthians i, 20.

Wherefore it is true that that which the world despises is worthy of honor, and that which the world approves should be disregarded. Christ has completely changed the ideas and the ideals of men. By the words of Christ and by His example, this great miracle has been accomplished. The voice of Saint John the Baptist and his words of warning which are sounded in the Gospel read in the Mass this morning signal the approach of one of history's most solemn moments: "Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight His paths,—all flesh shall see the salvation of God." [1]

Since the coming of Christ, everyone realizes in what true wisdom consists. Even those who scorn the ways of wisdom must inevitably admit the triumph of her standards. Men may, indeed, describe the saints as fools because they give up things which the world esteems, but the saints think the worldly foolish because they give up the one, true, essential good, which is God Almighty Himself.

The saints prefer the austerities of life to its pleasures, and in humble, unaffected devotion they taste the sweetness and feel the joy which comes from friendship with Christ on earth, a friendship which blossoms in all its fullness and beauty in the kingdom of heaven. The devotees of the world are continually distraught by a veritable tempest of varied emotions. They are constantly tormented by the burnings of an insatiable lust for pleasure. They plunge boldly into briars and brambles in order to gather flowers of self-gratification, only to find when they have grasped those which seemed most attractive that the petals have fallen from the flowers and only the thorny stems of remorse remain. O, how often at the close of a day of disillusionment have sinners given

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[1] Luke iii, 4, 6.

sincere testimony of their estimate of wisdom. "Our fretful lives," they have exclaimed, "are not worthy of rational beings. We are the ones who have been the fools, the truly wise are the good." And it is this same sad cry of desolation, these same words of despairing confession, which the reprobate souls will shriek out on the last great day before the tribunal of Jesus Christ. But then both the cry of despair and the confession will be uttered too late. The truly wise are those who know enough to love God and to serve Him in this life, and thus secure for themselves eternal happiness in the life to come. "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom: and the knowledge of the holy is prudence."[1] They who are ignorant of earthly science but who know enough to love God, are infinitely wiser than the learned who have neglected the study of this one, essential lesson.

One day, Brother Aegidius, a Franciscan lay brother, whose work consisted of the hardest kind of manual labor, met Saint Bonaventure, a member of the same Franciscan order, and the possessor of one of the most brilliant minds in the history of the Church. "Blessed art thou, Father Bonaventure," exclaimed the humble lay brother, "for since you know so many beautiful things you must, indeed, be very close to God." "Listen, dear brother," replied Saint Bonaventure, "the only way to judge a man's learning is by his knowledge of the love of God. No person who has learned to love God is ignorant, and no person who has not learned this fundamental truth, no matter how many other things he may know, can be considered wise."

We may with profit meditate on the profound wisdom in these words of Saint Bonaventure. Before the Christ Child can come into our hearts at Christmas, we must fill up the

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[1]Proverbs ix, 10.

valleys of indifference and neglect in the fulfillment of the practices of our religion. We must also tear down the mountains and hills which pride and selfishness, and other prevailing passions, have thrown up between us and our heavenly Father. And the crooked ways in our lives must be made straight, and the rough ways plain, and we, too, "shall see the salvation of God."

"Arise in Thy might, we beseech Thee, O Lord, and come," are the words of the prayer which the priest recites in the Mass for today. "Come, O Lord, and with Thy great power assist us, that by the help of Thy grace that which is hindered by our sins may be hastened by Thy merciful forgiveness."

FEAST OF THE NATIVITY.

"At that time, there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus that the whole world should be enrolled. This enrolling was first made by Cyrinus, the governor of Syria. And all went to be enrolled, every one into his own city. And Joseph also went up from Galilee out of the city of Nazareth, into Judea to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem because he was of the house and family of David, to be enrolled with Mary his espoused wife, who was with child. And it came to pass, that when they were there, her days were accomplished, that she should be delivered. And she brought forth her first-born Son, and wrapped Him up in swaddling clothes, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn. And there were in the same country shepherds watching, and keeping the night watches over their flock. And behold an angel of the Lord stood by them, and they feared with a great fear. And the angel said to them: Fear not; for behold I bring you good tidings of great joy, that shall be to all the people; for this day is born to you a Saviour, Who is Christ the Lord, in the city of David. And this shall be a sign unto you: You shall find the Infant wrapped in swaddling clothes, and laid in a manger. And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly army, praising God, and saying: Glory to God in the highest; and on earth peace to men of good will." Luke ii, 1-14. (The Gospel of the Mass at midnight.)

LET us go in spirit to Bethlehem. From all parts of the world today the thoughts of millions of minds are turning to that cold, bleak cave on Juda's hill where the Infant Jesus is born. We are privileged to be among the number of those who are making this pilgrimage to the crib of mankind's Redeemer. With increasing abundance year after year, we receive divine consolation from our visit to the lowly throne of the new born King. Kneeling in His

sacred presence, we fondly pledge fidelity anew. Once more in sincere repentance for the past we beg forgiveness. Once more with implicit trust and perfect confidence we implore future assistance. Once more our natural pride and selfishness melt into humility and brotherly love, as with warm tears of deepest affection we gaze on the tender, helpless Babe in His mother's arms.

He has come on earth because He loves us, because He wishes us to love Him. Saint Bernard says that when God loves, He desires nothing more than to be loved in return. And Christ has promised that if we love Him He will come to take up His abode in us. We must bear in mind, however, that the sincerity of our love is proved by faithful conformity to God's will, for Christ has also said, "He that loves Me keeps My commandments." [1]

We have been lukewarm in the past, it is true, dear Jesus, and have been guilty of many sins. Oftentimes we have been lost in the pursuit of earthly things and have been forgetful of our eternal destiny.

But now, Divine Jesus, we lay at Thy feet our solemn promise to remain faithful forevermore. From the bottom of our hearts we adore Thee as our Creator and our God. We joyfully choose and revere Thee as our Lord and King, and for tribute we offer Thee all the affections of our poor hearts.

We have nothing else to offer Thee, dear Jesus. We have no gold of love, because instead of Thee we have loved

[1] John xiv, 15.

creatures. We have no incense of prayer, because we have lived apart from Thee. We have no myrrh of mortification, for rather than deprive ourselves of miserable pleasures we have often preferred to offend Thee by sin.

The only gift which we can make to Thee is our hearts, poor and unworthy though they be. Deign to accept them, Jesus, and change them; and change us from sinners into saints. Give us, therefore, this gold, this incense and this myrrh, that we, too, may join the Magi in their journey to Thy birthplace. Give us the gold of Thy holy love, the spirit of fervent prayer, and the desire and strength to mortify ourselves in everything that would displease Thee.

Within a few short moments, Jesus, Thou art to come into the hearts of many of us in Holy Communion. Thou art to give Thyself entirely to us, and we wish to belong entirely to Thee. And as Thou penetratest into the deepest recesses of our souls we beg Thee never to leave us.

"May we at all times think of Thee. May we ever seek Thee and ever find Thee. May we always follow Thee and reach Thee. May Thy holy name be ever on our lips and in our hearts, and to Thy praise and glory may every work of ours be done. Be Thou, alone, and evermore our hope. Be Thou all our trust, our wealth, our delight, our joy, our consolation, our rest, our endless peace. Be Thou our food and our refreshment, our refuge and our help. In Thee, O Lord, may our minds and hearts remain fixed and firm and rooted immovably forevermore." [1]

[1]Saint Bonaventure.

Heart of Jesus, deign to hear and answer this prayer of each single one of us:

Make me, Jesus, wholly Thine,
Take this wayward heart of mine,
Guide me through this world so drear,
Heart of Jesus, hear!

When I draw my parting breath,
When my eyes shall close in death,
Then, sweet Jesus, be Thou near,
Heart of Jesus, hear! [1]

[1] Selected.

SUNDAY WITHIN THE OCTAVE OF CHRISTMAS.

THE END OF THE YEAR.

"At that time Joseph, and Mary, the Mother of Jesus, were wondering at those things which were spoken concerning Him. And Simeon blessed them, and said to Mary, His mother, Behold this Child is set for the fall, and for the resurrection of many in Israel, and for a sign which shall be contradicted. And thy own soul a sword shall pierce, that out of many hearts thoughts may be revealed. And there was one Anna, a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Aser; she was far advanced in years, and had lived with her husband seven years from her virginity. And she was a widow until four-score and four years; who departed not from the Temple, by fastings and prayer serving night and day. Now she at the same hour coming in, confessed to the Lord: and spoke of Him to all that looked for the redemption of Israel. And after they had performed all things according to the law of the Lord, they returned into Galilee, to their city, Nazareth. And the Child grew, and waxed strong, full of wisdom: and the grace of God was in Him." Luke ii, 33-40.

THE Introit in the Mass for this Sunday begins with words from the Book of Wisdom, "While all things were in quiet silence, and the night was in the midst of her course, Thy almighty Word, O Lord, leapt down from heaven from Thy royal throne."[1] To this joyous and majestic proclamation of the mystery of the Incarnation, the Church answers in her beautiful liturgical language by making an act of faith in the words of the Psalmist, "The Lord hath reigned; He is clothed with beauty. The Lord is clothed with strength, and hath girded Himself."[2]

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[1]Wisdom xviii, 14, 15

[2]Psalm xcii, 1.

This is the final Sunday of the year, and our thoughts leap forward from the little crib in which the Infant Babe of Bethlehem is lying to the last great day of our lives, when that Babe will be enthroned in glory above the stars and we shall appear in fear and trembling before His judgment seat.

The prophecy of Simeon which is recalled in today's Gospel foreshadows the division of mankind that will take place at the end of the world. "This Child is set for the fall, and for the resurrection of many in Israel, and for a sign which shall be contradicted." [1] This Child is the object both of intense hatred and of tremendous love. All the generations of men that quickly succeed one another on the headlong course to eternity are divided into two distinct groups. These groups are absolutely opposed to each other. There is a never ending struggle without quarter between them. There are those who contradict Christ and persecute Him. They are the legions of the wicked. There are those who love Christ and who die for Him. They are the saints and the martyrs. And the same division obtains in the world beyond the grave. Christ is even then "a sign to be contradicted." [2] Some will stand to the right of the omnipotent Judge, and they belong to the elect. Others will recoil to the Judge's left. They are the horde of the condemned.

As the last hours of the year are fleeting towards the past, it is a most appropriate time for us to reflect whither are we going. In which camp are we to be found? What kind of works have we been doing? What kind of thoughts have we been cherishing? With what kind of companions have we been associating? In which group of combatants are we enrolled? Let us ponder over the answers to these

[1] Luke ii, 34.
[2] Luke ii, 34.

questions, and then let us with God's certain help make and keep apposite resolutions. The time which remains is short. "Death still draws nearer, never seeming near."

Even if a year's review of our lives reveals things and conditions that denote ominous consequences, we need not be discouraged. The thought of the severity of our eternal Judge must not prevail over the thought of the goodness of our merciful Redeemer. The One Who should in justice punish us, wishes to save us. If, therefore, with humility and true repentance we kneel before the crib of our Infant Saviour and implore Him with warm faith and fervent hope to pardon us and to help us, we may be absolutely sure that our prayers will be heard and favorably answered.

* * *

Saint Andrew Avellino struggled for many years to reach perfection. He meditated frequently on the goodness of God and on his own unworthiness of God's friendship. He was in constant fear of offending God, but was continually hoping for God's mercy. These were the two wings which he trusted would carry him to heaven,—fear and hope. "He that feareth the Lord shall tremble at nothing, and shall not be afraid for He is his hope." [1]

"O almighty and eternal God, direct our actions in conformity with Thy good pleasure, that in the name of Thy beloved Son, we may be worthy to abound in good works." [2]

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[1] Ecclesiasticus xxxiv, 16.

[2] Prayer in the Mass.

FEAST OF THE CIRCUMCISION OF OUR LORD.

THE BEGINNING OF THE YEAR.

"At that time, after eight days were accomplished that the Child should be circumcised, His name was called Jesus(Saviour), which was called by the angel before He was conceived in the womb." Luke ii, 21.

THE rite of circumcision was prescribed by the old law eight days after the birth of a male child. The purpose of this ceremony was to remind the sons of Adam of their heritage of original sin, and the consequent need of redemption. There was no necessity, however, for the holy and immaculate Son of God, the author of purity itself, to submit to the observance of this custom. Only because the Christ-child wished to resemble His brethren in sorrow and suffering did He thus offer the first drops of His precious blood. His one desire was to receive the name which is above every other name, the name of Jesus.

Saint Bernard observes the striking contrast between humiliation by circumcision and honor by the name of Saviour. This contrast is apparent also in other circumstances of the Incarnation, a contrast which denotes a sublime mingling of the human and divine. Christ is born of a woman, but His Mother is a virgin; He is wrapped in swaddling clothes, but a choir of angels honors and adores Him. He is hidden in a manger, but His presence is made known by the radiance of a wondrous star. Thus the circumcision demonstrates that Christ is truly man, and the name Jesus which He assumes proclaims Him truly God.

In the year which is beginning, we may exemplify this contrast in our own lives. We may spiritualize and divinize our earthly existences by weaving into human textures the rich golden threads of God's graces.

A life which concerns itself entirely with worldly affairs can have but little value in the eyes of God. A life which completely disregards the soul's ultimate destiny is a life which is being lived in vain. A life which spurns the Author of Life and scorns acts that merit God's friendship is a life which leads to eternal death.

Meditating on this thought, Saint Stanislaus Kostka attained perfection of earthly life and possession of heavenly glory. His constant expression was that he was not born for the things of this world but for the happiness of heaven.

The currents of our lives may be directed through very ordinary channels, but if the sky above these courses is illumined by the presence of God, the ocean of eternity into which these lives are flowing will sparkle with the brilliance of light celestial.

* * *

In the book of Genesis, we read of the journey of Jacob into Syria. We learn that this pilgrimage fatigued him and that he stopped in a certain place for rest. The sun was already set, and in the sky the first stars were twinkling. Jacob placed a stone for his pillow and fell into a deep sleep. "And he saw in his sleep a ladder standing upon the earth, and the top thereof touching heaven, the angels also of God ascending and descending by it."[1] And he heard the voice of the Lord that blessed him because he had been faithful, "I am the Lord God of Abraham thy father, and the God of

[1]Genesis xxviii, 12.

Isaac; the land wherein thou sleepest I will give to thee and to thy seed. And thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth.—And I will be thy keeper whithersoever thou goest."[1] And when Jacob awoke, his heart was moved and his eyes were wide with wonder at the vision. "Indeed the Lord is in this place and I knew it not,"[2] he exclaimed. "And trembling he said, 'How terrible is this place! This is no other but the house of God, and the gate of heaven.'"[3] And Jacob made a vow, saying, "The Lord shall be my God."[4]

As we begin another year, dearly beloved, we may call to mind the words of Jacob: "Terrible indeed is this life," every moment and action of which evolves before the face of the Most High God. But we desire, O Lord, and we humbly entreat Thee to be our guide; we love Thee, we adore Thee, and we shall serve Thee as our God.

If we try with all our hearts to be faithful to this promise, even the most common and ordinary actions of our lives will have infinite value; and any portion of the earth where we walk or any place that we sleep will be to us as an open door to heaven, will be as a luminous ladder to mount with the angels to God.

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[1] Genesis xxviii, 13-15.
[2] Genesis xxviii, 16.
[3] Genesis xxviii, 17.
[4] Genesis xxviii, 21.

FEAST OF THE EPIPHANY.

DOCILITY AND OBSTINACY.

"When Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Juda, in the days of King Herod, behold there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem, saying, Where is He that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen His star in the east, and are come to adore Him. And King Herod, hearing this, was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. And assembling together all the chief priests and the scribes of the people, he inquired of them where Christ should be born. But they said to him: In Bethlehem of Juda, for so it is written by the prophet (Micheas): And thou, Bethlehem, the land of Juda, art not the least among the princes of Juda; for out of thee shall come forth the ruler that shall rule my people Israel. Then Herod privately calling the wise men, learned diligently of them the time of the star which appeared to them; and sending them into Bethlehem, said, Go and diligently inquire after the Child and when you have found Him, bring me word again, that I also may come and adore Him. Who having heard the king, went their way; and behold the star which they had seen in the east went before them, until it came and stood over where the Child was. And seeing the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy. And entering into the house, they found the Child with Mary, His mother, and falling down, they adored Him. And opening their treasures, they offered Him gifts; gold, frankincense, and myrrh. And having received an answer in sleep that they should not return to Herod, they went back another way into their own country." Matthew ii, 1-12.

THREE kings with their retinues have come from a distant country. They have crossed mountains and forded streams. They have braved the dangers of the desert to offer their tribute of love and honor to a Babe in His Mother's arms.

The arrival of the large and richly caparisoned caravan astonishes all Jerusalem, but the announcement of the purpose of its coming astonishes the city still more,—"There is born to you a King and we are come to adore Him."

The Jewish people were to be the heirs of all the Scriptural promises. They were supposed to realize the import of the prophecies, and yet the announcement of the fulfillment of these predictions was neither credited nor welcomed.

O, Bethlehem, hidden among the gardens of the hills of Juda, only those who are faithful to God appreciate the significance of your brightness! Only eyes undimmed by the dust of the world, only minds unsmirched by the taint of sin, can fathom that star in your heavens!

God sent these three pagan kings into the very capital of the Jewish world. They met the priests and scribes of the Sanhedrin, whose duty it was to guard and interpret the holy books. These priests and scribes had indeed studied the Scriptures. They had counted all the marks of punctuation and had scrutinized every word. They knew and correctly informed the three pilgrims about the birthplace of the Messias. They knew how to point out the way of salvation, but they did not take it themselves. Like signposts which point out directions, they, themselves, did not move.

In the celebrated letter to the Romans, the Apostle has explained the enigma of this blindness. The people of Israel had been adopted by God as children. They had been given the law and the prophets, and had been schooled in the true religion. But they proved unfaithful to their heritage and were then rejected by God. "All the day long I have spread my hands to a people that believeth not, and contradicteth me,"[1] cries Saint Paul in the words of the prophet Isaias.

[1] Romans x, 21.

Israel was therefore cast off and God turned to the Gentile nations. "I was found by them that did not seek Me." [1]

By the feast of the Epiphany, Holy Mother Church commemorates this great benevolence to the Gentiles. The variant attitudes of the three pilgrim kings and the Sanhedrin invite our consideration,—the docility of those who had not received the promises, and the obstinacy of the others who had been the favored children. With the enthusiasm of converts, Paul and Barnabas had proclaimed to the Jews in the synagogue of Antioch the Gospel of Jesus Christ: "Men, brethren, children of the stock of Abraham, and whosoever among you fear God, to you the word of this salvation is sent." [2] "But the next sabbath day, almost the whole city came together, to hear the word of God. And the Jews, seeing the multitudes, were filled with envy, and contradicted those things which were said by Paul, blaspheming. Then Paul and Barnabas said boldly: 'To you it behooved us first to speak the word of God; but because you reject it, and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, behold we turn to the Gentiles.' " [3]

The letter to the Romans proposes this reflection: "See then the goodness and the severity of God: towards them indeed that are fallen, the severity; but towards thee, the goodness of God, if thou abide in goodness, otherwise thou also shalt be cut off." [4]

No grace that we receive, no matter how great it may be, can render us secure. We may well tremble when we realize the unsatisfactory way that we oftentimes cooperate

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1 Romans x, 20.
2 Acts xiii, 26.
3 Acts xiii, 44-46.
4 Romans xi, 22.

with grace. It may be, perhaps, that on the last day some child of a savage tribe will be preferred before us, a soul that has been reached only by the distant echo of the voice of the missionary or the light of a divine inspiration that guided him as the ray of a star to the throne of the King of Kings.

SUNDAY WITHIN THE OCTAVE OF EPIPHANY.

CHRISTIAN IDEALS.

"And when Jesus was twelve years old, they going up to Jerusalem according to the custom of the feast, and having fulfilled the days, when they returned, the Child Jesus remained in Jerusalem; and His parents knew it not. And thinking that He was in the company, they came a day's journey, and sought Him among their kinsfolks and acquaintance. And not finding Him, they returned into Jerusalem, seeking Him. And it came to pass, that after three days they found Him in the temple sitting in the midst of the doctors, hearing them and asking them questions. And all that heard Him were astonished at His wisdom and His answers. And seeing Him, they wondered. And His mother said to Him, Son, why hast Thou done so to us? Behold Thy father and I have sought Thee sorrowing. And He said to them, How is it that you sought Me? Did you not know that I must be about My Father's business? And they understood not the word that He spoke unto them. And He went down with them, and came to Nazareth; and was subject to them. And His mother kept all these words in her heart. And Jesus advanced in wisdom and age, and grace with God and man." Luke ii, 42-52.

THE Son of God came on earth to conquer the world, but instead of beginning to command, He began to obey. He was obedient to His heavenly Father, Who wished Him to remain for three days in the Temple away from the loving care and the gaze of the most holy of mothers. For thirty years He obeyed the Blessed Virgin and Saint Joseph, hardening in rough work the hands which had power to create new firmaments. The hidden years of this divine life were passed within the walls of a humble home. They may appear to have been years of slight importance,

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but every day we see with increasing clearness the wisdom in that retirement. Jesus has shown by these years of preparation for His public life the shallow character of human knowledge and the smallness of human achievement. It is written,—"I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and the prudence of the prudent I will reject.—Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?" [1] Nevertheless the world is full of this folly. The greatness of its heroes lies in force. The predominating thought and all-consuming passion of its children is to conquer. Even the young are taught that humility is the virtue of a weakling, and that obedience is unworthy of a man.

Meanwhile the world is without peace, and its establishments endure only a day. The prophet Abdias has proclaimed with burning words to pitiable man,—"Thou art exceeding contemptible. The pride of thy heart hath lifted thee up, who dwellest in the clefts of the rocks, and settest up thy throne on high: who sayest in thy heart: 'Who shall bring me down to the ground?'" [2] And the answer of the prophet to this question chills the heart with terror.—"'Though thou be as exalted as an eagle and though thou set thy nest among the stars: thence will I bring thee down,' saith the Lord." [3]

Only the saints have understood that true greatness consisted in making themselves small. They, alone, have known the joy of being free from ambition and the cancerous growths of the world's sinful pleasures, the joy of obedience to the laws of God. None have appreciated better than they the sad consequences of following the maxims of the world. The life of a saint, according to Saint Paul, "is hid with Christ

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[1] I Corinthians i, 19, 20.
[2] Abdias i, 2, 3.
[3] Abdias i, 4.

in God."[1] O, refulgent ideal, that makes men happy even in the poverty of the cloister, even in the solitude of the desert! O, sweet seclusion, refuge of world-weary souls who crave repose in the peace of the Saviour!

* * *

Jeanne Dallemagne, a sister of charity, was dying. She was a daughter in religion of Saint Vincent de Paul, "a treasure of a daughter," as the venerable founder of this congregation reverently termed her. She had renounced the world and had taken the habit of this community, the servants of the sick and the poor. She had consecrated her life especially to the care of those who were suffering with loathsome diseases, and she was now afflicted herself. Saint Vincent de Paul approached her bedside and asked her which she would prefer to have been in life, a great lady or a sister of charity. The dying sister, who had almost lost her speech, summoned all her remaining strength and pronounced her last words,—"sister of charity." She had ignored the world and the world had been ignorant of her, but she knew the one thing that is necessary; she knew the sublime happiness of friendship with Jesus, a friendship that she enjoyed on earth and eternalized in heaven.

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[1] Colossians iii, 3.

SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY.

THE BLESSED VIRGIN AT CANA OF GALILEE.

"At that time, there was a marriage in Cana of Galilee; and the mother of Jesus was there. And Jesus also was invited, and His disciples, to the marriage. And the wine failing, the mother of Jesus saith to Him, They have no wine. And Jesus saith to her, Woman, what is it to Me and to thee? My hour is not yet come. His mother saith to the waiters, Whatsoever He shall say to you, do ye. Now there were set there six waterpots of stone, according to the manner of the purifying of the Jews, containing two or three measures apiece. Jesus saith to them, Fill the waterpots with water. And they filled them up to the brim. And Jesus saith to them, Draw out now, and carry to the chief steward of the feast: and they carried it. And when the chief steward had tasted the water made wine, and knew not whence it was, but the waiters knew who had drawn the water: the chief steward calleth the bridegroom, and saith to him, Every man at first setteth forth good wine, and when men have well drank, then that which is worse: but thou hast kept the good wine until now. This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee; and manifested His glory, and His disciples believed in Him." John ii, 1-11.

CANA of Galilee,—the city whose very name delights and charms every Christian! It was within thy walls that God proclaimed to the world for the first time the goodness and power of His sweetest creature.

Mary is present as a guardian angel at a marriage which is taking place in this city. With the solicitous eye of a mother, she notices that the supply of wine is insufficient. She wishes to save the hosts from embarrassment, and she

turns, therefore, to Jesus. Her words express only a fact,—"They have no wine," [1] but her heart implores a miracle. Jesus understands. The heart of the Son responds to the beatings and the yearnings of the Mother's heart.

The apparent objection of Jesus, "My hour is not yet come," [2] shows the infinite delicacy of the Son of God, Who, in the very act of granting the request, wishes it to be known that this concession is due entirely to Mary. Christ wishes future generations to know that Mary, His Mother, has opened the floodgates of divine mercy. Thus all of her children will appreciate her goodness and understand her tremendous influence.

* * *

Under the sun of Bethlehem, into the field at harvest time, following in the footsteps of the husbandmen, Ruth gleaned the ears of corn that escaped the hands of the reapers. Ruth was a young woman who had come from the land of Moab and had elected to be considered as belonging to the people of Israel. She was poor and unknown, but she was destined by God to become the queen of all that country. Booz, the owner of the field, noticed the diligence and the evident goodness of the young Moabitess, and her conspicuous virtues deeply impressed him. He thus instructed his servants, —"Let fall some of your handfuls of purpose, and leave them, that she may gather them without shame, and let no man rebuke her when she gathereth them." [3] Thus did Ruth glean in the field until evening, thinking in her humility, "I have found grace in Thy eyes, my Lord, Who has comforted me." [4]

The Blessed Virgin Mary is symbolized by this woman

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[1] John ii, 3.
[2] John ii, 4.
[3] Ruth ii, 16.
[4] Ruth ii, 13.

of the Old Testament. Mary pleased God by her purity of life and her humility. God, therefore, made her the mother of His own divine Son, and He made her our mother also.

From the day of that first miracle in Cana, all the graces that God gives to men pass through His Mother's hands. God wishes in this way to honor her. These favors and blessings are as grains which God scatters and Mary collects as did Ruth and bestows them as gifts for her children.

* * *

Consider, Christian soul, the goodness and the power of this Mother. Saint Philip Neri, with tears in his eyes, was wont to exclaim, "Immaculate Virgin, you have me to save!" We, who are "mourning and weeping in this valley of tears," are taught by the Church to invoke Mary as "our life, our sweetness and our hope." Even children know how to pray to the Mother of God.

If we are sinful and the dark clouds of our offences obscure the light of heaven, we may prostrate ourselves at the feet of our Mother and tell her that we are sorry. Mary will surely intercede for us, and we shall feel our souls refreshed and overflowing by the sweet flood of God's grace and His love.

THIRD SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY.

EVEN ONE WORD!

"At that time, when Jesus was come down from the mountain, great multitudes followed Him; and behold a leper came and adored Him, saying, Lord, if Thou wilt Thou canst make me clean. And Jesus stretching forth His hand, touched him, saying, I will, be thou made clean: and forthwith his leprosy was cleansed. And Jesus saith to him, See thou tell no man: but go, show thyself to the priest, and offer the gift which Moses commanded for a testimony unto them. And when He had entered into Capharnaum, there came to Him a centurion beseeching Him, and saying, Lord, my servant lieth at home sick of the palsy, and is grievously tormented. And Jesus saith to him, I will come and heal him. And the centurion making answer, said, Lord, I am not worthy that Thou shouldst enter under my roof: but only say the word, and my servant shall be healed. For I also am a man subject to authority, having under me soldiers: and I say to this man, Go, and he goeth: and to another, Come, and he cometh: and to my servant, Do this, and he doth it. And Jesus hearing this, marvelled; and said to them that followed Him, Amen I say to you, I have not found so great faith in Israel. And I say to you, that many shall come from the east and the west, and shall sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven; but the children of the kingdom shall be cast into the exterior darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. And Jesus said to the centurion, Go, and as thou hast believed, so be it done to thee; and the servant was healed at the same hour." Matthew viii, 1-13.

THESE two miracles were rewards of great faith. The leper, whose flesh was being devoured by a ravenous, implacable disease, disregards the restrictions of the law with the furious desperation of a man who has nothing more to lose, and flings himself at the feet of the

Master,—"Lord, if Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean." [1] "And Jesus stretching forth His hand, touched him, saying, 'I will' ". [2] The centurion, a pagan, whom it would seem that the rigors of army life would have made insensible to pity, speaks even more sublimely,—"Lord, I am not worthy that Thou shouldst enter under my roof; but only say the word and my servant shall be healed." [3]

These two striking examples of confidence in Jesus thrill us with new courage. They mingle together on our lips, united in one sole prayer,—"Lord, if Thou wilt,—if Thou wilt only say the word."

It is written in the Book of Proverbs, "Have confidence in the Lord with all thy heart." [4] "Amen, I say to you, if you shall have faith,—if you shall say to this mountain, 'Take up and cast thyself into the sea,' it shall be done. And all things whatsoever you shall ask in prayer, believing, you shall receive." [5]

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Naaman, an idolater, general of the armies of the king of Syria, was attacked by a most loathsome disease. This repulsive and most persistent affliction resisted all medical remedies. Naaman learned that a prophet lived in Samaria, and accompanied by a great retinue of soldiers and servants, he made a journey into that country. He brought with him a letter from his ruler to the king of Israel, saying, "I have sent to thee Naaman, my servant, that thou mayest heal him of his leprosy." [6] "When the king of Israel had read

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[1] Matthew viii, 2.
[2] Matthew viii, 3.
[3] Matthew viii, 8.
[4] Proverbs iii, 5.
[5] Matthew xxi, 21, 22.
[6] IV Kings v, 6.

the letter, he rent his garments and said: 'Am I God, to be able to kill and give life, that this man hath sent to me, to heal a man of his leprosy?' "[1] When Eliseus, the man of God, heard this remark of the king, "he sent to him saying: 'Why hast thou rent thy garments? Let him come to me, and let him know that there is a prophet in Israel.' "[2]

"So Naaman came with his horses and his chariots, and stood at the door of the house of Eliseus. And Eliseus sent a messenger to him, saying: 'Go, and wash seven times in the Jordan, and thy flesh shall recover health and thou shalt be clean.' Naaman was angry and went away, saying: 'I thought he would have come out to me, and standing would have invoked the name of the Lord his God, and touched with his hand the place of the leprosy, and healed me. Are not the rivers of Damascus better than all the waters of Israel that I may wash in them and be made clean?' So as he turned and was going away with indignation, his servants came to him and said to him. 'Father, if the prophet had bid thee do some great thing, surely thou shouldst have done it. How much rather what he now hath said to thee,—Wash and thou shalt be clean.' Then he went down and washed in the Jordan seven times and his flesh was restored like the flesh of a little child and he was made clean. And returning to the man of God with all his train, he came, and stood before him, and said: 'In truth I know that there is no other God in all the earth, but only in Israel.' "[3]

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When God's minister suggests remedies for our infirmities of soul, we should not hesitate to make use of the means to grace which he recommends. The leprosy of sin may seem

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[1] IV Kings v, 7.
[2] IV Kings v, 8.
[3] IV Kings v, 9-15.

to us to be too deeply rooted, and Christ may seem to be too far away. These impressions, however, are not true. We should be docile and confident. The centurion believed that one word of the Saviour pronounced at a distance could perform a miracle; the leper believed that Christ could make whole his gnawed and blighted flesh. God heard their prayers, and He will also hear our pleadings.

The Church directs the recitation of this prayer in the Mass for today,—"Almighty and eternal God, have compassion on our weakness, and stretch forth in our defence the right hand of Thy majesty, in the name of Jesus, Thy Son."

FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY.

THE TEMPEST.

"At that time, when He entered into the boat, His disciples followed Him: and behold a great tempest arose in the sea, so that the boat was covered with waves, but He was asleep. And His disciples came to Him, and awaked Him, saying: Lord, save us, we perish. And Jesus saith to them, Why are you fearful, O ye of little faith? Then rising up He commanded the winds, and the sea; and there came a great calm. But the men wondered, saying, what manner of man is this, for the winds and the sea obey Him?" Matthew viii, 23-27.

ADDITIONAL details of the event which is reviewed in today's Gospel are given in the parallel passage in the Gospel of Saint Mark.[1] We learn that Jesus and His disciples were crossing from one side of the lake of Genesareth to the other side. This was the lake which the fishermen of the country knew as the Sea of Galilee. Dark, ominous clouds were rolling down from the mountains which surround the lake, and the sky above it was livid with the threats of a terrible tempest. And Jesus was in the "hinder part" of the first ship, sleeping.

Suddenly the storm burst with great fury, and the boats were rocked and tossed about by the waves. One moment raised on the crests and the next moment plunged in the depths, the ships seemed much too frail to withstand the assaults of the elements. Faster than the disciples could bale them out, new deluges would flood them. Even these

[1]Mark iv, 35-40.

old and experienced mariners, accustomed as they were from their youth to battle with the dangers of the deep, were filled with fear. This was in truth a tempest and a hurricane. And Jesus was asleep!

From all the ships came cries of terror. The disciples finally went to Jesus, "and awaked Him, saying: 'Lord, save us, we perish.'"[1] And Jesus saith to them: 'Why are you fearful, O ye of little faith?' Then rising up He commanded the winds and the sea and there came a great calm."[2]

The men who were in the other boats were astounded for they did not know the Son of God. "What manner of man is this," they exclaimed, "for the winds and the sea obey Him?"[3] Many centuries before this time, however, the Psalmist had given the answer to this question,—"Thou art the hope of all the ends of the earth, and in the sea afar off. Thou, Who preparest the mountains by Thy strength, being girded with power: Who troublest the depths of the sea, the noise of its waves!"[4]

Twenty centuries have now passed into history since a fragile bark ventured out into the tempestuous sea of time. All about this bark have raged the stormy waves of passion, while above it whirled the hurricanes of hatred. The pilots of this ship, the successors of the apostles, scan the horizon and guide their vessel in the name of the Saviour towards the light which gleams in the distance. The name of their ship is the Church,—the Church of the saints and the martyrs. Down through the ages even up to the present day, persecution, error and human malice have done their utmost to

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[1] Matthew viii, 25.
[2] Matthew viii, 26.
[3] Matthew viii, 27.
[4] Psalms lxiv, 6, 7.

destroy her. Men have believed on many occasions that the ship was sinking, that she was at last at her journey's end. Safe and secure, however, she rides above the highest surges of her enemies and serenely sheds the downpour of persecution.

It may seem that Jesus is sleeping. Jesus, however, is watching over His Church. And He will be with her to the end of her journey, the journey which ends with time. He will awaken on the last day when the roster of the martyrs and other saints will have been completed, awakened by the sound of their voices imploring protection and help. This will be the day of the Church's triumph, the day on which she finally arrives in the harbor of peace.

This thought, the thought of the continual presence of Christ even in the midst of the tempests, has inspired the saints with wonderful courage.

Saint Ignatius, Bishop of Antioch, was brought from Syria to Rome as a prisoner of the Emperor Trajan. Bound in shackles and guarded by a company of ten brutal soldiers, Saint Ignatius was conducted to the imperial city. The soldiers were so cruel in their treatment of him that Ignatius describes them as ten leopards.

He learned in the course of his journey that some of the residents of Rome were striving to obtain the grace of the emperor to have his sentence of death commuted. This news saddened Ignatius, and with heart and hand trembling with emotion he wrote from Smyrna the celebrated letter to the Romans. This letter vibrates with faith, the faith which the early Christians died with pleasure to defend. "I proclaim first of all that I die willingly for Christ. Do not prevent this sacrifice, I pray you. Do not harm me by your pity. Permit that I become food for the wild beasts of the Coliseum, for

thus I shall possess God. I am the grain of the Lord. I wish to be ground by the teeth of wild beasts so that I may be made into the bread of Christ." The letter ends with this appeal,—"Persevere to the very end in expectation of the coming of Jesus!"

Courage, therefore, fellow Christians! Do not weaken in the struggle. Fix your gaze upon the goal. "The way of the just is right, the path of the just is right to walk in. And in the way of Thy judgments, O Lord, we have patiently waited for Thee: Thy name and Thy remembrance are the desire of the soul." [1]

"O God, Who knowest that we are surrounded by perils so great as to be unendurable because of our human frailty, grant us strength of mind and body, so that by Thy assistance we may overcome the things with which we are afflicted on account of our sins." [2]

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[1] Isaias xxvi, 7, 8.

[2] Prayer in the Mass.

FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY.

THE GOOD IN THE MIDST OF THE WICKED.

"At that time Jesus spoke this parable to the multitude, saying: The kingdom of heaven is likened to a man that sowed good seed in his field: but while men were asleep his enemy came and oversowed cockle among the wheat, and went his way. And when the blade was sprung up, and had brought forth fruit, then appeared also the cockle. And the servants of the good man of the house coming said to him: Sir, didst thou not sow good seed in thy field? whence then hath it cockle? and he said to them: An enemy hath done this. And the servants said to him: Wilt thou that we go and gather it up? And he said: No; lest perhaps gathering up the cockle, you root up the wheat also together with it. Suffer both to grow until the harvest, and in the time of the harvest I will say to the reapers: Gather up first the cockle, and bind it in bundles to burn; but the wheat gather ye into my barn" Matthew xiii, 24-30.

JESUS has made use of the parable of the wheat and the cockle to describe the life of the good and the bad on this earth. From the first peep of the tender blade through the soil in the spring until the full, ripe stalk hangs heavy in the autumn, the growth of the grain is hampered by the cockle.

Christ has sown good seed in His field,—the seed that with good works should fructify one hundred fold. But the enemy has come and has sown the seeds of evil.

Saint Augustine tells us that it is possible for evil to grow up in the Church. He observes that "the kingdom of God on earth is an open city, exposed to all kinds of insidious assaults. The Church in this world is not yet purified. It

has not yet attained the peace of the celestial granary where every kernel is selected, perfect and safe for eternity."

It can happen that the bad would become even more numerous than the righteous, for human nature since the sin of Adam more readily inclines to evil than to good. Like arid, unfertile land, it yields weeds and brambles more readily than fruits and flowers.

The whole world is covered by a thick hedge of briers and of cockle which almost conceals the growth of the grain. Those who regard only appearances are filled with dismay at this situation. They do not seem to understand that God permits evil in order that good may be accomplished, in order that heaven may be really merited by His chosen ones.

In the battle of life, the good and the bad are side by side. Sometimes they are in the same family, seated at the same table. Jesus has said, "Do not think that I came to send peace upon the earth: I came not to send peace but the sword. For I came to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother.—And a man's enemies shall be they of his own household." [1]

We should not, however, be downcast or disheartened. Jesus has promised victory and freedom. We do not know the day nor the hour, but we know that the time is not far off. "For as in the days before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, even till the day in which Noe entered into the ark, and they knew not till the flood came, and took them all away; so also shall the coming of the Son of Man be. Then two shall be in the field: one shall be taken and one shall be left. Two women shall

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[1] Matthew x, 34-36.

be grinding at the mill: one shall be taken and one shall be left."[1]

Let us, therefore, take courage, dearly beloved, and endeavor always to be steadfast in the battle. We are not living for today, which, indeed, is dull and gloomy; we are living, rather, for the morrow, for the glorious, happy coming of the Bridegroom. Blessed surely are those virgins who find themselves prepared for His unexpected coming and with lighted lamps go forth to meet Him.

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In the book of Tobias, one of the most precious jewels in Holy Scripture, we find many thoughts of comfort and encouragement. The holy man whose virtues are recorded in this book was a model of piety, patience, and of perfect resignation to God's will. He was made a prisoner in his youth by the Assyrians, but even as a captive he did not forsake the way of truth. "He fed the hungry, and gave clothes to the naked, and was careful to bury the dead."[2] But it so happened that in the performance of his many works of mercy God permitted a great misfortune to befall him,—the loss of his sight. He did not, however, repine against God, "but continued immovable in the fear of God, giving thanks to God all the days of his life."[3]

"His relations and kinsmen mocked at his life, saying: 'Where is thy hope, for which thou gavest alms, and buriedst the dead?' "[4] What had his goodness gained for him! "But Tobias rebuked them, saying: 'Speak not so, for we are the children of saints, and look for that life which God will give to those that never change their faith from Him.' "[5]

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[1]Matthew xxiv, 38-41.
[2]Tobias i, 20.
[3]Tobias ii, 14.
[4]Tobias ii, 15, 16.
[5]Tobias ii, 17, 18.

The Lord sent an angel to cure Tobias and to shower him with blessings. "I am the angel Raphael," he said to him, "one of the seven who stand before the Lord." [1] "Because thou wast acceptable to God, it was necessary that temptation should prove thee." [2] "When thou didst pray with tears, and didst bury the dead,—I offered thy prayer to the Lord." [3] "Bless ye the God of heaven, give glory to Him in the sight of all that live, because He has shown His mercy to you." [4]

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[1] Tobias xii, 15.
[2] Tobias xii, 13.
[3] Tobias xii, 12.
[4] Tobias xii, 6.

SEPTUAGESIMA SUNDAY.

FEAR AND TRUST.

"At that time, Jesus spoke to His disciples this parable: The kingdom of heaven is like to a householder, who went out early in the morning to hire laborers into his vineyard. And having agreed with the laborers for a penny a day, he sent them into his vineyard. And going out about the third hour, he saw others standing in the marketplace idle, and he said to them, Go you also into my vineyard, and I will give you what shall be just: and they went their way. And again he went out about the sixth and the ninth hour, and did in like manner. But about the eleventh hour, he went out, and found others standing; and he saith to them, Why stand you here all the day idle? They say to him, Because no man hath hired us. He saith to them, Go you also into my vineyard. And when evening was come, the lord of the vineyard saith to his steward, Call the laborers, and pay them their hire, beginning from the last even to the first. When therefore they were come that came about the eleventh hour, they received every man a penny. But when the first also came, they thought that they should receive more; and they also received every man a penny. And receiving it, they murmured against the master of the house, saying, These last have worked but one hour, and thou hast made them equal to us that have borne the burden of the day and the heats. But he answering, said to one of them, Friend, I do thee no wrong; didst thou not agree with me for a penny? Take what is thine, and go thy way: I will also give to this last even as to thee. Or, is it not lawful for me to do what I will? Is thy eye evil, because I am good? So shall the last be first, and the first last. For many are called, but few are chosen." Matthew xx, 1-16.

AT the beginning of this season of austere penance, the Church calls her children to unite with her in prayer. In the Divine Office for today every priest reads the long lament of the matin-song, which prepares the soul for the most serious thoughts. In the second nocturn of

this office each priest must also read the burning words of Saint Augustine, words which sear the mind with the awful thought of the state of fallen man. And now in the Gospel of the Mass the voice of God sounds full and clear as a clarion, summoning all mankind to work in the Master's vineyard.

Vast, tremendously vast, is the number of those whose lives are spent in languid ease, who are unmindful of salvation even up to the very night-time of life.

Jesus, the good Husbandman, has a choice vineyard. It is a vineyard which He has purchased with His own blood, and on which He has lavished all His love. One by one, He calls all men to work in this vineyard,—His Church. The recompense which they are to receive is not in proportion to the number of hours that they have labored, but, rather, to the alacrity and willingness with which they have responded to the call. Happy, indeed thrice happy, are they who have entered the vineyard in the early morn of life and have labored faithfully for Jesus until life's close. They may rejoice with the Psalmist, exulting, "O God, my God, to Thee do I watch at break of day."[1]

The reward of eternal happiness is, however, not restricted to those who have never sinned. Others of us who veil with sorrow past portions of our lives may providentially make amends for the time which we have lost. Even today we may answer the call of the Master. Those who are in the first class, therefore, should not be presumptuous, and those of us who are in the second group should not despair.

If you are one of those who have served God faithfully from childhood and are happy in the thought that you have borne for Christ the heat and labor of the day, do not be too certain that you are safe. The day is not yet done, and

[1]Psalms lxii, 2.

the reward is not yet sure. Be not too confident of your strength. Keep in mind the story of the worker in the vineyard who labored from early morning on through the day and then because he was envious of his brother and murmured against the master received at the last moment a severe reprimand and lost his place. "Take what is thine, and go thy way." [1] "Is thy eye evil because I am good?" [2]

If, however, we feel ourselves outside of the vineyard, unworthy even to raise our eyes to God, we need not abandon hope, for as long as a ray of light illumines our horizon, as long as a beat of life throbs in our heart, we may yet obtain pardon for our sins.

Saint Cyprian, Bishop of Carthage, exhorts us in the same words which he directed to his former persecutor, Demetrianus, —"Up to the very last moment of your life in this world, no tears for your sins will be shed in vain, no work of penance will be too late." If we answer with fervor the call of the Master and devote ourselves entirely to His service, we shall surely be numbered among the elect.

Therefore, Christian soul, fear and trust! Fear yourself, and trust in God. It is written that in the vineyard of the Saviour it is possible for the first to be numbered among the last and the last to be included with the elect.

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During the reign of the Emperor Licinius, forty Roman soldiers were put to death near Sebaste in Armenia because they professed belief in Jesus Christ. The faith of these forty martyrs, and the fortitude with which they endured their agony, strengthens our faith and inspires us to bear with resignation the cares and trials of this mortal life.

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[1] Matthew xx, 14.
[2] Matthew xx, 15.

These forty soldiers were condemned by the prefect to be immersed in a freezing pond. It was a bitterly cold night in the depth of winter and all the surrounding country was white with snow. As the forty martyrs entered the water they joined in a prayer to God to grant them grace and courage. "Grant, O Lord, that as forty of us enter into the race not one of us may miss the crown of glory."

The Roman sentinel who was on guard watching the forty dying Christians beheld a vision. Over the chilling waters a marvellous light appeared, a light which reached to the heavens. Down through this vista of light celestial he saw angels descending with crowns. There were thirty-nine of these crowns, and the soldier wondered that one of the forty was missing. But even as he wondered, he noticed that one of the condemned soldiers was struggling from the icy water towards the warm bath that had been prepared for those who would renounce Christ. A cry of grief came from the martyrs at the defection of their companion. This cry struck the heart of the sentinel as if it were the voice of the Lord speaking to him. Jesus had called him at the eleventh hour to enter His vineyard and die for His Church, and the sentinel answered the call. He was the last, who had come to take the place of the other who had been called first and had finally succumbed to temptation. That day the angels brought down to the earth the forty crowns.

SEXAGESIMA SUNDAY.

THE WORD OF GOD.

"At that time, when a very great multitude was gathered together and hastened out of the cities unto Him, He spoke by a similitude; the sower went out to sow his seed. And as he sowed, some fell by the wayside; and it was trodden down, and the fowls of the air devoured it. And other some fell upon a rock; and as soon as it was sprung up, it withered away, because it had no moisture. And other some fell among thorns; and the thorns growing up with it, choked it. And other some fell upon good ground; and being sprung up, yielded fruit a hundredfold. Saying these things, He cried out, he that hath ears to hear, let him hear. And His disciples asked Him what this parable might be. To whom He said, To you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God, but to the rest in parables; that seeing they may not see, and hearing may not understand. Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God. And they by the wayside are they that hear; then the devil cometh, and taketh the word out of their heart, lest believing they should be saved. Now they upon the rock are they who when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no roots, for they believe for a while, and in time of temptation they fall away. And that which fell among thorns are they who have heard, and going their way, are choked with the cares and riches and pleasures of this life, and yield no fruit. But that on the good ground, are they who in a good and perfect heart, hearing the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit in patience." Luke viii, 4-15.

THE chief concern of the world today is pleasure. Satan caters to our love for pleasure and supplies a veritable whirlwind of allurements to storm along the pathway of our lives. Thus the tempter strives to sweep away the seeds of virtue even before these seeds have taken root.

Nor are those souls secure from danger in which the seeds of goodness have already begun to grow. The buds of faith, hope and charity may be already opening into flowers, but as long as we live these flowers will be exposed to the insidious blight of passion and the withering frosts of human weakness. It is, indeed, a difficult thing to cultivate faithfully and perseveringly the blossoms of goodness that flower in God's garden here on earth and fructify in the celestial garden of Paradise.

God wishes that the seed shall be sown everywhere, by the wayside, on the rocks, and among the thorns. Christ said to His disciples, "Behold, I send you as lambs among wolves.—Into whatsoever house you enter, first say: 'Peace be to this house.' And if the Son of peace be there, your peace shall rest upon Him; but if not it shall return to you. —But into whatsoever city you enter, and they receive you not, going forth into the streets thereof, say: 'Even the very dust of your city that cleaveth to us, we wipe off against you. Yet know this, that the kingdom of God is at hand.'—He that heareth you, heareth Me; and he that despiseth you, despiseth Me; and he that despiseth Me despiseth Him that sent Me." [1]

We should, therefore, receive the word of God from the lips of God's priests with respect and devotion,—with respect to fulfill all the precepts, with devotion to follow the Master. Thus shall we become sons of peace. Thus shall the seed of the word of God flourish in our souls.

As an example of perseverance in virtue and of indomitable bravery in difficulties, the Church proposes today for our encouragement the striking figure of Saint Paul. Bound in chains by the Jews, the great apostle was brought into the presence of King Agrippa in the Roman tribunal of Caesarea

[1] Luke x, 3-16.

in order to give an account of his life and of his actions. All the Jews knew that Paul in his youth had been a Pharisee of the most rigid sect and that he had bitterly opposed the followers of Christ. As he told Agrippa,—"Many of the saints did I shut in prison, and when they were put to death I brought the sentence. And oftentimes punishing them, in every synagogue, I compelled them to blaspheme; and being yet more mad against them, I persecuted them even unto foreign cities. Whereupon when I was going to Damascus with authority and permission of the chief priests, at midday, O king, I saw in the way a light from heaven above the brightness of the sun, shining round about me, and them that were in company with me. And when we were all fallen down on the ground, I heard a voice speaking to me,—'Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me? It is hard for thee to kick against the goad.' And I said, 'Who art thou, Lord?' And the Lord answered, 'I am Jesus Whom thou persecutest. But rise up, and stand upon thy feet; for to this end have I appeared to thee, that I may make thee a minister, and a witness of those things which thou hast seen,—that people may be converted from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and a lot among the saints.'—Whereupon, O king Agrippa, I was not incredulous to the heavenly vision." [1]

In the second letter which Saint Paul wrote to the faithful of Corinth, the Apostle described some of his sufferings. "Five times did I receive forty stripes, save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once I was stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I was in the depth of the sea, in journeying often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils from my own nation, in perils from the Gentiles, in

[1] Acts xxvi, 10-19.

perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils from false brethren, in labor and painfulness, in much watchings, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness. Besides those things which are without; my daily instance, the solicitude for all the churches." [1]

Thus did the fierce persecutor of the Church become the ardent and zealous apostle, receiving and nurturing the tiny seed of the word spoken to him by God, a seed that was truly a hundredfold productive.

Thou, O Christian soul, art called by the same voice. Recite with fervor the prayer which the Church assigns to the Mass which is offered today,—"O God, Who seest that we put not our trust in any deed of our own, mercifully grant that by the protection of the teacher of the Gentiles we may be defended against all adversities."

[1] II Corinthians xi, 24-28.

QUINQUAGESIMA SUNDAY.

DARKNESS.

"At that time, Jesus took unto Him the twelve, and said to them, Behold we go up to Jerusalem, and all things shall be accomplished which were written by the prophets concerning the Son of man: for He shall be delivered to the Gentiles, and shall be mocked, and scourged, and spit upon; and after they have scourged Him, they will put Him to death; and the third day He shall rise again. And they understood none of these things, and this word was hid from them, and they understood not the things that were said. Now it came to pass, when He drew nigh to Jericho, that a certain blind man sat by the wayside, begging. And when he heard the multitude passing by, he asked what this meant. And they told him that Jesus of Nazareth was passing by. And he cried out, saying, Jesus, Son of David have mercy on me. And they that went before, rebuked him, that he should hold his peace: but he cried out much more, Son of David, have mercy on me. And Jesus standing, commanded him to be brought unto Him: and when he was come near, He asked him, saying, What wilt thou that I do to thee? But he said, Lord, that I may see. And Jesus said to him, Receive thy sight: thy faith hath made thee whole. And immediately he saw, and followed Him, glorifying God; and all the people when they saw it, gave praise to God." Luke xviii, 31-43.

JESUS was on His way to Jerusalem. He had been speaking with the apostles about His approaching passion and death. The apostles, however, did not understand the meaning of the Master's words, even though the prophets had described the events of which He spoke many times and in great detail.

As they drew near to the gates of Jericho, a man who was as blind of vision as the apostles were dark of mind sat

by the wayside begging. This poor, blind beggar cries out to Jesus to cure him of his blindness.

We may with advantage follow his example, for even though we may not be entirely sightless in matters pertaining to the welfare of our souls, the keenness of our vision may be somewhat impaired.

Our life here on earth has been defined as a warfare, and our enemy has been called the ruler of the kingdom of darkness. This enemy seeks to capture us by obscuring with fanciful clouds the eternal light of God's truths, and by dimming the power of our vision with the murky vapors of pleasure.

We must, indeed, be vigilant. We must ever keep in mind the thought that the greatest evil in the world is sin. Its shadows may enshroud our soul and gradually deepen into darkness. But instead of being frightened and seeking for the sunlight, we advance a few more steps into the night. Above us rages the ominous roar of the tempest. Before us through lightning flashes of remorse we see the pathway to perdition. Nothing daunts us, however, and we continue on the road to ruin.

There are two striking examples in the Gospel of different types of sinners, Judas and Peter. Judas sinned for love of money. Jesus did everything possible to warn him, and yet he betrayed his Redeemer for money. Even when the apostle, accompanied by the soldiers with their blazing torches, came into the Garden of Olives and Judas approached Jesus to give Him the traitor's kiss, even then the Saviour with kindly countenance and affectionate greeting called him "friend." This was the last grace, the last warning to Judas, but Judas froze his heart, and Judas lost his soul.

Peter sinned because of fear. In the hall of the house of Anna, Peter, afraid of the enemies of Jesus, solemnly affirmed and maintained with an oath that he did not know his Master.

Only a short time before this, he had just as strongly asserted that he was ready to suffer imprisonment and even death itself for Jesus. Then came the moment of blindness. Jesus was led out from the tribunal by a guard of soldiers at the very moment that Peter was making his weak and cowardly denial. The sweet and tenderly reproachful gaze of the condemned Redeemer met the eyes of the apostle, and at once tears of repentance welled from his soul. He saw immediately the horror of his fall; he bitterly bemoaned the wrong which he had done.

Meditate, Christian soul, on these two examples, Judas and Peter. The first one is a mystery of darkness, the second one a miracle of light. In the deep recesses of your soul, contemplate this contrast between darkness and light, between blindness and vision, between despair and repentance. Today Jesus is passing near you. He is going with His apostles to Jerusalem and He is speaking of His passion and death. Take courage and call out to Him as He passes. One cry is enough, He will hear you. Repeat the prayer in the Mass today,—"O Lord, of Thy clemency, harken to our pleadings, loose us from the bonds of sin, and keep us from all adversity."

FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT.

ILLUSION.

"At that time, Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert, to be tempted by the devil. And when He had fasted forty days and forty nights, afterwards He was hungry. And the tempter coming, said to Him: if Thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread. Who answered and said: It is written: Not in bread alone doth man live, but in every word that proceedeth from the mouth of God. Then the devil took Him up into the holy city, and set Him upon a pinnacle of the Temple, and said to Him: If Thou be the Son of God, cast Thyself down: for it is written: that He hath given His angels charge over Thee, and in their hands shall they bear Thee up, lest perhaps Thou dash Thy foot against a stone. Jesus said to him: It is written again: Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God. Again the devil took Him up into a very high mountain: and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them, and said to Him: All these will I give Thee, if falling down Thou wilt adore me. Then Jesus saith to him: Begone, Satan: for it is written: The Lord thy God shalt thou adore: and Him only shalt thou serve. Then the devil left Him, and behold angels came and ministered to Him." Matthew iv, 1-11.

SATAN resorts to many and divers crafty methods to ensnare the souls of men. He makes use of all kinds of deceits to influence men to forget and despise eternal good and to cling to the things of the world. He does not spare anyone. He tempts the man who leads a careless, sinful life; he also tempts the mystic praying in solitude. The devil attacks the sinner who readily yields to temptation; he also assails the saint who scorns his insidious advances.

Jesus, the Son of God, whose inalterable tranquility of soul could not be in the least way disturbed by the onslaughts

of the evil one, wished, nevertheless, to permit exterior temptations. He desired in this manner to give an example of the proper way in which poor, frail human creatures should resist temptations and merit for themselves imperishable crowns of glory.

We should detach our minds and hearts, dearly beloved, from the bits of tinsel that twinkle so gaily before us. These attractions are not worthy of Christians. Their glint and gleam and tawdry grandeur are but illusions. Grasping them, they crumble into ashes. We may, of course, enjoy the temporal blessings which God has bestowed on us, but we should beware lest we overestimate their value. Temporal pleasures never completely satisfy the soul. If we are poor, we long for riches; if we are rich, we long for power and honor; and we always long for something which we do not now possess. True contentment is found only in absolute conformity to the will of God.

If, by the practice of virtue, we have learned to overcome the grosser forms of temptation, we may expect to be tried in more subtle ways. Resistance to material enticements paves the way for seductions of the spirit. Satan seeks to stir up in our minds the destructive tempests of pride. If we lead a holy life, the devil attempts to inveigle us to think perhaps that we are really saints. If the slightest spark of such suggestions starts to glimmer, we must stamp it out at once by humble prayer.

During this holy season of penance, we should practice some mortification. Saint Leo the Great observes in this connection that fasting consists not alone in abstinence from food, but more especially in abstinence from evil.

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When Naaman, the general of the Syrian army, had followed the directions of Eliseus and had been cured of his

leprosy, he wished to make a gift to the prophet. He had brought with him from his country for this purpose "ten talents of silver and six thousand pieces of gold and ten changes of raiment."[1] But Eliseus gave him this answer: "'As the Lord liveth, before Whom I stand, I will receive none,' and when he pressed him, he still refused."[2] Naaman thereupon began his journey back. He had not gone far distant when Giezi, the servant of the prophet, wishing to get something for himself, overtook the departing general. When Naaman saw Giezi he "leapt down from his chariot to meet him and said, 'Is all well?'"[3] And Giezi made reply that all was well but that the prophet had sent him to ask for a talent of silver and two changes of garments. "And Naaman said 'It is better that thou take two talents.'"[4] When evening was come Giezi returned to the house and hid his treasures and afterwards he appeared before Eliseus. When the prophet asked Giezi where he had been, the servant answered that he had not left the house. Then Eliseus said, "'Was not my heart present when the man turned back from his chariot to meet thee? So now thou hast received money, and received garments to buy olive yards and vineyards and sheep and oxen, and men servants and maid servants. But the leprosy of Naaman shall also stick to thee, and to thy seed forever.' And he went out from him a leper, as white as snow."[5]

If we wish to overcome infirmities of the spirit, we must entirely free ourselves from the ties that bind us to the world, for even the finest silken cord of self-indulgence sutures the spirit dangerously close to fatal infection.

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[1] IV Kings v, 5.
[2] IV Kings v, 16.
[3] IV Kings v, 21.
[4] IV Kings v, 23.
[5] IV Kings v, 26, 27.

Just before the preface of the Mass for today, the priest opens his arms and recites in silence this prayer,—"We solemnly offer sacrifice at the beginning of Lent, beseeching Thee, O Lord, that while we restrict ourselves in the use of bodily food, we may also refrain from indulgence in harmful pleasures."

SECOND SUNDAY OF LENT.

PURITY.

"At that time, Jesus taketh unto Him Peter, and James and John his brother, and bringeth them up into a high mountain apart: and He was transfigured before them. And His face did shine as the sun: and His garments became white as snow. And behold there appeared to them Moses and Elias talking with Him. And Peter, answering, said to Jesus: Lord, it is good for us to be here: if Thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles, one for Thee and one for Moses, and one for Elias. And as he was yet speaking, behold a bright cloud overshadowed them. And lo, a voice out of the cloud, saying: This is My beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased: hear ye Him. And the disciples hearing, fell upon their face: and were very much afraid. And Jesus came and touched them: and said to them: Arise, and fear not. And they lifting up their eyes saw no one, but only Jesus. And as they came down from the mountain, Jesus charged them saying: Tell the vision to no man, till the Son of man be risen from the dead." Matthew xvii, 1-9.

THE three apostles had climbed with Jesus to the top of a high mountain. And Jesus was transfigured before them.

There are many persons who think that they would like to have ascended the mountain with the favored disciples. They could have seen Jesus dazzling with light and splendor.

If these people are really sincere in this desire, it is not yet too late. Jesus gladly awaits their companionship. He is waiting to receive them in the midst of a field of lilies.

Many centuries before the transfiguration, the inspired Psalmist had sung, "Who shall ascend the mountain of the Lord?—The innocent in hands and clean of heart.--He shall receive a blessing from the Lord and mercy from God his Saviour." [1]

[1]Psalm xxiii, 3-5.

The epistle read in the Mass today extols the virtue of purity,—"For this is the will of God, your sanctification,—that every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honor, not in the passion of lust, like the Gentiles that know not God.—For God hath not called us unto uncleanness but unto sanctification." [1]

Therefore, Christian soul, guard not only your senses but also your heart. The struggle is long and bitter. Our inclinations tend to evil. Everywhere our eyes encounter dangerous and suggestive things, nor are these dangers confined to the outside world. They exist even in homes. Even the hermits in the desert are not unmolested. We are oftentimes obliged to struggle valiantly to banish the thoughts which Satan suggests and to blot out the images which he most vividly portrays. The slightest advances of the enemy should, therefore, be courageously repulsed. Mortification is indeed difficult and sometimes sharp and irksome, but mortification protects virtue as a hedge about the garden protects the lilies. If we wish to partake of celestial blessings, we must endure some sufferings here.

When Peter in an ecstasy of joy expressed the wish to remain on Mount Thabor, he did not realize for what he was asking. Peter had forgotten what Jesus had said only a short time before when He was speaking of His passion and death,—"If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me." [2] Peter did not understand this truth, that only through tribulation and death could he attain resurrection and glory, until after he knew of his Saviour's agony and crucifixion.

After the resurrection Jesus asked Saint Peter in the presence of the other apostles and on the occasion of giving

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[1] I Thessalonians iv, 3-7.
[2] Matthew xvi, 24.

Peter charge of His sheep, "Simon, son of John, lovest thou Me?" [1] And Peter replied, "Lord, Thou knowest all things; Thou knowest that I love Thee." [2] Jesus then foretold that Peter would have the same sufferings and death which He, Himself, had endured,—"When thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and lead thee whither thou wouldst not." [3]

And Peter grew old amid the trials and pains of his apostolate. A few months before he was crucified, Saint Peter wrote the following exhortation to the faithful: "Flee, brethren, from the corruption of that concupiscence which is in the world." [4] "Labor the more, that by good works you may make sure your calling and election. For doing these things you shall not sin at any time. For so an entrance shall be ministered to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." [5] Throughout this epistle, Saint Peter closely associates the thought of his approaching martyrdom with the thought of the glorious beatific vision which will follow it.

When the time of his execution arrived, Saint Peter was crucified with his head downwards as he had requested, because he deemed himself unworthy to die in exactly the same manner as did his divine Master.

"O God, Who knowest how destitute we are of all strength, help us inwardly and outwardly, that in body we may be defended from all adversities and in mind cleansed of evil thoughts."

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[1] John xxi, 17.
[2] John xxi, 17.
[3] John xxi, 18.
[4] II Peter i, 4.
[5] II Peter i, 10, 11.

FEAST OF SAINT JOSEPH.

"When Mary, the mother of Jesus, was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child, of the Holy Ghost. Whereupon Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not willing publicly to expose her, was minded to put her away privately. But while he thought on these things, behold the Angel of the Lord appeared to him in his sleep, saying: Joseph, son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife; for that which is conceived in her, is of the Holy Ghost; and she shall bring forth a Son: and thou shalt call His name Jesus: for He shall save His people from their sins." Matthew i, 18-21.

SAINT Joseph was chosen by God to be the companion and the protector of the Blessed Virgin Mary. God revealed to him the mystery of the Incarnation, and thus the saint knew that the Child in Mary's bosom was conceived of the Holy Ghost and that He was the long expected Messias.

Henceforward the life and labors of Saint Joseph are entirely concerned with the special charge of protecting the Divine Child. The holy patriarch made every possible effort and sacrifice that Jesus and Mary might be properly nourished and clothed. He took every precaution to shield them from harm and from danger. Without his vigilant solicitude, they would surely have been victims of the cruel Herod. They would often have been cold and hungry. Were it not for Saint Joseph, Jesus and His Blessed Mother would have been obliged to have endured many insults and additional hardships. Without the companionship of Saint Joseph, the Blessed Virgin would have been the target for many sneers and the frequent object of scorn and of ridicule.

We cannot read the passage of the Gospel in the Mass without having intense admiration and love for this saint whose feast we today commemorate. Our hearts are filled with joy as we contemplate the picture of the little home in Nazareth. We see Jesus grow from boyhood into manhood with the Blessed Virgin and Saint Joseph by His side. We behold the vision of the venerable saint on his deathbed, his body worn by the labors of years, and his mission finally completed. Saint Joseph breathes forth his soul to God in the arms of those whom he had protected for God,—in the arms of Jesus and Mary.

The words which human efforts phrase are inadequate to express a tribute worthy of the incomparable merits of Saint Joseph. The inspired words of Holy Scripture which the Church adapts for the epistle in the Mass for his feast constitute a most fitting encomium,—"He was beloved of God and men, whose memory is in benediction. He made him like the saints in glory.—He glorified him in the sight of kings.—He sanctified him in his faith and meekness and chose him out of all flesh.—And he girded him about with a glorious girdle, and clothed him with a robe of glory, and crowned him with majestic attire." [1]

The Old Testament narrates the history of another great patriarch who bore the name of Joseph. Beloved by God because of his constant fidelity to God's law and also because of the absolute purity of his life, he did not lose confidence in God nor murmur against Him even in the midst of most discouraging tribulations. He trusted implicity in the Lord despite all his trouble. He was strong and upright in facing every difficulty. He was frank and truthful in his conduct in every situation.

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[1] Ecclesiasticus xlv, 1-9.

He was summoned into the presence of Pharao, the ruler of Egypt, and asked to interpret the king's dreams. Joseph explained that the seven beautiful kine and the seven full ears of corn about which the king told him were seven years of plenty, and that the seven lean kine and the seven scant ears were seven years of famine which were to follow the years of plenty.

Joseph advised Pharao to provide during the fruitful years for those which were to follow and to appoint helpers to carry out his plans. And Pharao asked, "Can we find such another man that is full of the spirit of God?" [1] He said therefore to Joseph, "Behold, I have appointed thee over the whole land of Egypt." [2] Pharao took the ring from his own hand and put it on the hand of Joseph, "and he put upon him a robe of silk, and put a chain of gold about his neck,—that all should know that he was made governor over the whole land of Egypt." [3]

When the famine came, as Joseph had predicted, there was bread in all the land of Egypt. And when the people cried to Pharao for food, he said to them, "Go to Joseph, and do all that he shall say to you." [4] Joseph had the keys to all his granaries and had charge of all his treasures. Joseph had the first place in Pharao's kingdom.

Joseph is a figure of Saint Joseph, whose fidelity and purity God rewarded with the first place in His household on earth, the humble home in the village of Nazareth, and Saint Joseph has the same place in heaven.

When we are troubled with cares and anxieties, we seem to hear a voice as did the famished and suffering Egyptians,

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1 Genesis xli, 38.
2 Genesis xli, 41.
3 Genesis xli, 42, 43.
4 Genesis xli, 55.

"Go to Joseph." Saint Joseph has the keys to the granaries of God's graces.

These sentiments are in exact accord with the beautiful prayer which the priest recites today at the altar,—"May we be assisted, we implore Thee, O Lord, by the merits of the spouse of Thy most holy Mother, that what we cannot obtain by our own prayers may be granted through his intercession."

FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT.

THE LIVING BREAD.

"At that time, Jesus went over the sea of Galilee, which is that of Tiberias: and a great multitude followed Him, because they saw the miracles which He did on them that were diseased. Jesus therefore went up into a mountain: and there He sat with His disciples. Now the Pasch, the festival day of the Jews, was near at hand. When Jesus therefore had lifted up His eyes, and seen that a very great multitude cometh to Him, He said to Philip: Whence shall we buy bread, that these may eat? And this He said to try him, for He Himself knew what He would do. Philip answered Him: Two hundred pennyworth of bread is not sufficient for them, that every one may take a little. One of His disciples, Andrew, the brother of Simon Peter, saith to Him: There is a boy here that hath five barley loaves, and two fishes: but what are these among so many? Then Jesus said: make the men sit down. Now there was much grass in the place. The men therefore sat down, in number about five thousand. And Jesus took the loaves: and when He had given thanks, He distributed to them that were sat down: in like manner also of the fishes as much as they would. And when they were filled, He said to His disciples: Gather up the fragments that remain, lest they be lost. They gathered up therefore, and filled twelve baskets with the fragments of the five barley loaves, which remained over and above to them that had eaten. Now those men, when they had seen what a miracle Jesus had done, said: This is of a truth the prophet that is to come into the world. Jesus therefore, when He knew that they would come to take Him by force and make Him king, fled again into the mountain Himself alone." John vi, 1-15.

THE first time that Jesus ever referred to the Blessed Eucharist was on the occasion of the miracle of the multiplication of the loaves of bread. What Christ said at this time was, however, but a preamble to the great discourse which He made shortly afterwards in the

synagogue at Capharnaum,—" 'Labor not for the meat which perisheth, but for that which endureth unto life everlasting, which the Son of man will give you.—For the bread of God is that which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life to the world.' They said therefore unto Him, 'Lord, give us always this bread.' And Jesus said to them, 'I am the Bread of life; he that cometh to Me shall not hunger, and he that believeth in Me shall never thirst.—I am the Living Bread which came down from heaven. If any man eat of this Bread he shall live forever. And the bread that I will give, is My flesh for the life of the world.' "[1]

Jesus invites all to partake of Holy Communion. This food is the strength of our souls. Without it, we would die. It is most impressive to consider that the multitude seeking refreshment for the soul gathers today about the minister of Christ as it gathered centuries ago about Christ Himself. The miracle is repeated every day and every hour of the day throughout the world. The priest takes bread in his hands, offers thanks to God, blesses the bread, breaks it and distributes it to the faithful. The consecrated bread is multiplied miraculously and many millions of Christians in all portions of the earth may partake of the body of Jesus Christ.

Long before this time, the prophet Malachias had described in terms of poetic beauty the tremendous miracle that has continued and shall continue even to the end of time. "For from the rising of the sun even to the going down, My name is great among the Gentiles, and in every place there is sacrifice, and there is offered to My name a clean oblation, for My name is great among the Gentiles,' saith the Lord of hosts."[2] Mass is celebrated in chapels nestling among the crags of the mountains and in the little churches dotting

[1] John vi. 27-52.
[2] Malachias i, 11.

sparsely settled country districts. The same sacrifice is offered in the great basilicas of the thriving cities as in the bleak, cross-surmounted cabins in the desolate Asiatic steppes and in the mission settlements which enlighten darkest Africa. Every day throughout the world for twenty centuries the same bread has been broken. While one priest is left on earth, the true Bread will come down from heaven, and the day on which the abomination and the squalor of desolation profanes the last altar will be the day on which the final hour of time shall sound and the dawn of eternity shall break.

When we assist at the holy sacrifice of the Mass, we know that the priest invites all who are in attendance to partake of Holy Communion. During the early centuries, all the faithful present at Mass received the Blessed Sacrament just as the apostles did at the Last Supper. We should always bear in mind that we are making a long and fatiguing journey and that we have need of food and strength on the way.

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When Queen Jezabel heard that the idolatrous prophets of Baal had been slain, she was very angry and vowed revenge. She sent word to Elias, the prophet, that she had sworn to kill him before the morrow. "Then Elias was afraid and rising up he went whithersoever he had a mind; and he came to Bersabee of Juda, and left his servant there. And he went forward one day's journey into the desert." [1] He was travel-worn and hungry. A throbbing pain pounded incessantly within his fevered head, and he prayed that God might call him from this life. He ventured this request not because of weakness or despair, but because of his hatred for sin and because it hurt him to witness the war which his people were waging against God. "And he cast himself down and slept

[1] III Kings xix, 3, 4.

in the shadow of the juniper tree; and behold an angel of the Lord touched him, and said to Him, 'Arise and eat.' He looked and beheld that there was at his head a hearth cake, and a vessel of water; and he ate and drank and he fell asleep again. And the angel of the Lord came again the second time, and touched him and said to him: 'Arise and eat, for thou hast yet a great way to go.' And he arose and ate, and drank, and walked in the strength of that food forty days and forty nights unto the mount of God, Horeb." [1]

We have heard many times the same injunction that the angel gave to Elias. We are on a long journey and the angel tells us also to wake up and partake of the food that will keep us strong to the journey's end. Easter is now approaching. Holy Mother Church offers to us the Living Bread.

Grant us, we pray Thee, O merciful God, that we may always venerate Thee with sincere devotion, and ever receive Thee with deep and abiding faith.

[1] III Kings xix, 5-8.

PASSION SUNDAY.

PROPER RESPECT FOR PRIESTS.

"At that time, Jesus said to the multitudes of the Jews, Which of you shall convince Me of sin? If I say the truth to you, why do you not believe Me? He that is of God heareth the words of God. Therefore you hear them not, because you are not of God. The Jews therefore answered and said to Him: Do not we say well, that Thou art a Samaritan (a heretic), and hast a devil? Jesus answered, I have not a devil; but I honor My Father, and you have dishonored Me. But I seek not My own glory; there is One that seeketh and judgeth. Amen, amen, I say to you: If any man keep My word, he shall not see death forever. The Jews therefore said: Now we know that Thou hast a devil. Abraham is dead, and the prophets; and Thou sayest: If any man keep My word, he shall not taste death forever. Art Thou greater than our father Abraham, who is dead? and the prophets are dead. Whom dost Thou make Thyself? Jesus answered. If I glorify Myself, My glory is nothing (to you). It is My Father that glorifieth Me, of Whom you say that He is your God. And you have not known Him; but I know Him. And if I shall say that I know Him not, I shall be like to you, a liar. But I do know Him, and do keep His word. Abraham your father rejoiced that he might see My day: he saw it, and was glad. The Jews therefore said to Him, Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast Thou seen Abraham? Jesus said to them, Amen, amen, I say to you, before Abraham was made, I am. They took up stones therefore to cast at Him; but Jesus hid Himself, and went out of the Temple." John viii, 46-59.

THE same treatment is often given to the ministers of Christ as was accorded to Christ, Himself. Vulgar insults, atrocious calumnies, cowardly attacks on reputations, as well as occasional bodily assaults, are directed against those who have left all things to follow in the footsteps of the Master. Jesus taught His apostles that it would not be necessary to defend themselves since they would always be under the protection of God.

It is our duty, dearly beloved, always to love and honor the priest. Impressed on his soul is the character of an eternal priesthood. He has been consecrated to God's service in a most special way. There is no grief that he cannot soften; there is no wound which he cannot heal.

He brings the light of God's grace for the first time to the infant in the sacrament of baptism. He brings the comfort of God's final blessing here on earth to the dying Christian. He pronounces the solemn words of absolution over the sinner, exercising in this way a power which even the angels in heaven do not possess. The priest brings peace to the souls of those who are torn by the anguish of remorse or who are assailed by doubts and difficulties of various kinds. His treasures are the children whom the world despises and abandons, and these children smile with love and gratitude because the priest is kind to them and helps them.

The loud cries of sinful humanity are lost in the silence of the clouds, but when the priest prays at the altar even his most subdued whisper penetrates the heavens and reaches to the throne of God.

* * *

The children of Israel were gathered together on Mount Carmel. They were in the presence of Achab, the ruler, who had forsaken the commandments of God and had fallen into idolatry. On one side of Achab were four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal, and on the other side stood Elias, the only one of the prophets of God who had not been killed. The prophets of Baal took part with Elias in the test which was to determine the true God. From morning until noon they cried out in vain for Baal to hear them and send down fire to consume the victim which they had prepared for sacrifice. Then Elias asked the people to come unto him and he built an altar and made ready the holocaust. Water was then poured

over the offering three times. "And when it was now time to offer the holocaust, Elias the prophet came near and said: 'O Lord God of Abraham and Isaac and Israel, show this day that Thou art the God of Israel, and I Thy servant, and that according to Thy commandment I have done all these things. Hear me, O Lord, hear me that this people may learn that Thou art the Lord God.'—Then the fire of the Lord fell and consumed the holocaust, and the wood, and the stones, and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench. And when all the people saw this, they fell on their faces and said, 'The Lord, He is God.' "[1]

Every morning during the holy sacrifice of the Mass there comes down on the altar not the fire which consumes but the fire which sanctifies. The King of kings descends from heaven at the word of the priest. No power that man possesses approaches in any degree the power which the priest exercises when he pronounces the solemn words of consecration.

Jesus Christ looks down from heaven on His Church and on His priests. From heights empyrean His vision pierces through all centuries and encompasses every single action of time. The glorious succession of popes, bishops and priests, of martyrs, confessors and virgins, is ever before Him. Christ is the Shepherd of shepherds. He will vindicate the honor of those who lived and died in His service. He will console them with the same affectionate farewell words that he addressed to the Church in the Apocalyptic vision of Saint John,—"Behold I come quickly."

"Draw near to us, O Lord, our God, and with Thy perpetual care watch over those of Thy children whom Thou hast refreshed with Thy mysteries."[2]

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1 III Kings xviii, 36-39.

2 Postcommunion Prayer in the Mass.

PALM SUNDAY.

THE PASSION.

"Then the soldiers of the governor taking Jesus into the hall, gathered together unto Him the whole band; and stripping Him they put a scarlet cloak about Him. And platting a crown of thorns, they put it upon His head, and a reed in His right hand. And bowing the knee before Him, they mocked Him, saying: Hail, king of the Jews. And spitting upon Him, they took the reed, and struck His head. And after they had mocked Him, they took off the cloak from Him, and put on Him His own garments, and led Him away to crucify Him. And going out, they found a man of Cyrene, named Simon; him they forced to take up His cross. And they came to the place that is called Golgotha, which is, the place of Calvary. And they gave Him wine to drink, mingled with gall. And when He had tasted, He would not drink. And after they had crucified Him, they divided His garments, casting lots; that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying: They divided my garments among them; and upon my vesture they cast lots. And they sat and watched Him. And they put over His head His cause written: This is Jesus, the King of the Jews. Then were crucified with Him two thieves; one on the right hand, and one on the left. And they that passed by blasphemed Him, wagging their heads, and saying: Vah, thou that destroyest the temple of God, and in three days dost rebuild it: save thy own self: if thou be the Son of God come down from the cross. In like manner also the chief priests, with the scribes and ancients, mocking, said: He saved others, Himself He cannot save. If He be the king of Israel, let Him now come down from the cross, and we will believe Him. He trusted in God; let Him now deliver Him if He will have Him; for He said: I am the Son of God. And the selfsame thing the thieves also, that were crucified with Him, reproached Him with. Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over the whole earth, until the ninth hour. And about

the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying: Eli, Eli, lamma sabacthani; that is, My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me? And some that stood there and heard, said: This man calleth Elias. And immediately one of them running took a sponge, and filled it with vinegar; and put it on a reed, and gave Him to drink. And the others said: Let be, let us see whether Elias will come to deliver Him And Jesus again crying with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost." Matthew xxvii, 27-50.

DRAW near, Christian soul, and meditate on the passion of your Lord and Saviour as He hangs dying on the cross. His body has been brutally torn by scourges and is covered with blood and with dust. His sacred head is cruelly lacerated by a crown of thorns. The pallor of fast-approaching death is on His face. His gentle hands, that oft have healed the sick and raised the dead to life, are now pierced through with nails.

The awful tension of nerves and sinews racks His body with an agony appalling. His breathing is heavy and painful, and His eyes betray the anguish that is slowly wearing Him to death. Cast aside for Barabbas, hanging in ignominy between two thieves, His persecutors continue to revile and taunt Him as He is dying on the cross.

"What are these wounds in the midst of Thy hands?"[1] cried the prophet. "They are not wounds," replies the Church, "they are flowers." Those divine hands, which we bathe with our tears, carry the precious gift of salvation.

And now the breathing becomes more difficult and more painful. The weight of His body draws terribly on His poor hands and feet. When He remains quiet, the very effort to keep motionless causes intense paroxysms of suffering. When He moves, every slightest twitching results in additional torments. "O, cruel tree, bend in thine arms," sighs the hymn

[1]Zacharias xiii, 6.

which the priest recites today in the Divine Office, "soften thy wood and gently enfold the body of the Saviour."

Jesus, however, utters no complaint. He has permitted, and, in fact, welcomed this sacrifice, in order to show how much He loves us. Nor do His greatest pains consist in physical sufferings. From His cross, He looks out over a raging sea of infuriated, hate-saturated faces, threatening and cursing Him in these moments of apparent downfall and disgrace. It grieves Him bitterly to think that for these impenitent sinners His blood is being shed in vain. But even for them, even for these persistent offenders, His poor, suffering, breaking heart throbs out its last few beatings; yes, even for them, His burning, bleeding lips gasp a prayer for forgiveness to His heavenly Father, "for they know not what they do." [1]

"Now there stood by the cross of Jesus, His mother." [2] And there were just as many wounds in the heart of Mary as there were in the body of her Son. "All that the nails did to the body of Christ," writes Saint Bernard, "just as much did love to the heart of Mary." "To what shall I compare thee? Or to what shall I liken thee, O daughter of Jerusalem," exclaimed the prophet Jeremias, in his lamentations. "To what shall I equal thee, that I may comfort thee, O virgin daughter of Sion? For great as the sea is thy destruction." [3]

Jesus looked down from the cross on His Blessed Mother, on Saint John, the beloved disciple, the only one of His apostles that had not fled, and the broken, bleeding lips began to

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[1] Luke xxiii, 34.
[2] Luke xix, 25.
[3] Lamentations ii, 13.

move. "Woman, behold thy son,"[1]—"Disciple, behold thy Mother."[2]

In these words, Christian soul, Jesus gave us His own Mother to be our Mother. Thus do we become brothers of Jesus Christ. And Mary, on her part, regards us as her own dear children.

At the foot of the cross, we may cast ourselves down, dearly beloved, and together with those whom the precious blood of Christ has made brothers repeat this prayer:

"Look down, O Lord, we beseech Thee, with favor on us Thy children, for whom Thou didst not hesitate to be delivered into the hands of executioners and undergo the torments of the cross."

[1] John xix, 26.
[2] John xix, 27.

EASTER SUNDAY.

THE JOY OF THE RESURRECTION.

"At that time, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought sweet spices, that coming they might anoint Jesus. And very early in the morning, the first day of the week, they come to the sepulchre, the sun being now risen; and they said one to another, Who shall roll back the stone from the door of the sepulchre? And looking, they saw the stone rolled back: for it was very great. And entering into the sepulchre, they saw a young man sitting on the right side, clothed with a white robe, and they were astonished: who saith to them, Be not affrighted; you seek Jesus of Nazareth, Who was crucified: He is risen, He is not here; behold the place where they laid Him: but go, tell His disciples, and Peter, that He goeth before you into Galilee: there you shall see Him, as He told you." Mark xvi, 1-7.

LET us join the holy women on their way to the sepulchre of the crucified Jesus. The first rays of the morning sun are already brightening the eastern sky, as we press eagerly forward through the shadows now dispersing into glorious dawn. We have sweet spices and precious ointments with which to anoint the sacred body of our loved One. As we draw near to the tomb, behold, a strange light flashes, a light more dazzling than the radiance of the sun. And now we see "a young man sitting on the right side, clothed with a white robe."[1] It is an angel of the Lord descended from on high, and with heaven's own refulgence is he vested.

The enormous stone slab that closed the door of the tomb is drawn aside. The seals set by the synagogue in order to

[1]Mark xvi, 5.

certify the death of Christ are broken. The Roman soldiers who for two days and two nights have stood guard in vigilant watchfulness before the sepulchre have now fled in terror. The arms which these sentries carried and which they cast aside as they forsook their posts in consternation are scattered in disorder upon the ground. The linen bandages which had enshrouded the adorable body of Christ, which had touched the wounds of the nails, the scourges and the spear, the cloth which had been placed around the thorn-pierced head, are all heaped in a confused mass upon the floor of the tomb. Everywhere we see evidences of an extraordinary combat, everywhere we descry unmistakable signs of a unique victory. Jesus Christ has conquered death! "He is risen!" [1] "He is not here!" [2]

May the angels announce the fact of this triumph to all the nations! May they blazon this conquest of the unconquerable in every part of the world! May this paean resound wherever human beings suffer and wherever human hearts are sad! May these vibrant notes of jubilation penetrate every crevice in which evil lurks and permeate every fissure in which the poisonous, smothering fumes of human hatred form!

This is truly "the day which the Lord hath made: let us be glad and rejoice therein." [3] May we all rise to a new life! May we have the courage to spurn the vitiated atmosphere of earth, the gaseous medium of soul-sickness and death! May we, instead, inspire the pure, invigorating drafts of regeneration and strength, the means to friendship with God and Life! May the light of this Easter morning flood the souls of all

[1] Matthew xxviii, 6.
[2] Matthew xxviii, 6.
[3] Psalm cxvii, 24.

God's children, and grant them the happiness which friendship with Christ insures!

No, Christian soul, this earth is not thy home. It is a tomb of polished marble, redolent of flowers and of perfumes, bejeweled with tears. But beautiful though it may be, it is, nevertheless, a tomb. Raise, therefore, your heart on high. Christ is risen; He is not here!

* * *

The evening of the same day two disciples of Christ were on their way from Jerusalem to Emmaus, a village about seven miles away from the city. They were discussing the events of the preceding week, the week of tragedy and of sorrow. While they were thus engrossed in conversation, Jesus approached them, and without permitting them to recognize Him, the Master asked them what it was that was troubling them. "And one of them, whose name was Cleophas, answering, said to Him, 'Art thou only a stranger in Jerusalem and hast not known the things which have been done there in these days,—concerning Jesus of Nazareth, Who was a Prophet mighty in work and word before God and all the people; and how our chief priests and princes delivered Him to be condemned to death, and crucified Him? But we hoped that it was He that should have redeemed Israel. And now besides all this, today is the third day since these things were done. Yea, and certain women, also of our company, affrighted us, who before it was light were at the sepulchre, and not finding His body, came, saying that they had also seen a vision of angels, who say that He is alive. And some of our people went to the sepulchre, and found it so as the women had said, but Him they found not.' Then He said to them, 'O foolish and slow of heart to believe in all things which the prophets have spoken. Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and so to enter into His glory?' And beginning at Moses

and all the prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures, the things that were concerning Him. And they drew nigh to the town, whither they were going: and He made as though He would go farther. But they constrained Him, saying, 'Stay with us, because it is towards evening, and the day is now far spent.' And He went in with them. And it came to pass, whilst He was at table with them, He took bread, and blessed, and brake, and gave to them. And their eyes were opened, and they knew Him: and He vanished out of their sight. And they said one to the other, 'was not our heart burning within us, whilst He spoke in the way, and opened to us the Scriptures?' And rising up, the same hour, they went back to Jerusalem: and they found the eleven gathered together, and those that were with them, saying: 'The Lord is risen indeed and hath appeared to Simon.' And they told what things were done in the way; and how they knew Him in the breaking of bread." [1]

To partake of this Bread, Christian soul, the Church invites us. She wishes to displace the sadness which is our natural portion in this vale of tears. She desires to dispel the gloom which enshrouds our souls. For by means of this heavenly refreshment, our sorrows change into joys and our shadows evanesce into light.

After Communion in the Mass for Easter Sunday, the Church offers this prayer: "Infuse us, O Lord, with the spirit of Thy love, to make us of one heart, whom, by Thy tender mercy, Thou hast refreshed with the paschal sacraments."

[1] Luke xxiv, 18-35.

LOW SUNDAY OR SUNDAY IN WHITE.

FAITH.

"At that time, when it was late that same day, the first of the week, and the doors were shut, where the disciples were gathered together, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came, and stood in the midst and said to them, Peace be to you. And when He had said this, He showed them His hands and His side. The disciples therefore were glad, when they saw the Lord. He said therefore to them again, Peace be to you: as the Father hath sent Me, I also send you. When He had said this, He breathed on them; and He said to them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost; whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them, and whose sins you shall retain, they are retained. Now, Thomas, one of the twelve, who is called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came. The other disciples therefore said to him, We have seen the Lord. But he said to them: Except I see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the place of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe. And after eight days, again His disciples were within, and Thomas with them. Jesus cometh, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, Peace be to you. Then He said to Thomas, Put in thy finger hither, and see My hands, and bring hither thy hand and put it into My side; and be not faithless, but believing. Thomas answered, and said to Him, My Lord and my God. Jesus saith to him, Because thou hast seen Me, Thomas, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and have believed. Many other signs also did Jesus in the sight of His disciples, which are not written in this book. But these are written, that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ the Son of God: and that, believing, you may have life in His name." John xx, 19-31.

SAINT Thomas was finally convinced of the fact that Christ had risen from the dead. It was not, however, until after he had actually seen the risen Saviour and had heard His sweet and gentle voice once more that Saint Thomas believed his companions. "My Lord and my

God," [1] he cried, in words that vibrate with love and conviction, in words of complete surrender.

The doubting apostle had refused to accept the statements of all his companions, despite the very definite character of their testimony, and despite, also, their unimpeachable integrity. He insisted that he would not credit what they told him unless he could verify the facts for himself, unless he could see Christ with his own eyes, unless he could touch Him with his own hands.

This was the situation which existed when the Lord actually appeared to Saint Thomas. After gently reproving the apostle for his obstinacy, the Saviour addressed him in words which apply also to us,—"blessed are they that have not seen and have believed." [2]

We believe in the resurrection on the testimony of those who actually saw Christ after He had risen from the dead. These apostles were very sure that what they asserted was the truth, for they endured torture and death to attest their belief. No person willingly suffers persecution for the sake of a lie, and voluntary martyrdom is irrefutable proof of sincerity.

The apostles knew, therefore, from their own experience that Christ had really risen. They gave up their lives to demonstrate that they were certain that this most stupendous miracle had taken place, the miracle which confirmed the truth of the preaching and the divinity of Christ.

Since the days of the apostles, millions of Christians have followed their example and have gladly shed their blood for Christ, bravely professing their faith in the crucified Re-

[1] John xx, 28.
[2] John xx, 29.

deemer and the resurrected Saviour, murmuring with their last few gasping breaths the sublime words of the Apostle's Creed.

This prayer should be frequently recited in preparation for our own resurrection and for our life in the world to come.

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Very early on Easter morning Mary Magdalene came with sweet spices and balsam in order to anoint the body of Jesus and to offer her final tribute of homage and devotion. As she drew near to the sepulchre, she saw that the stone at the door had been rolled back. On entering it, however, she did not find the body of her loved One. Startled and grief-stricken, Magdalene burst into tears. "Now as she was weeping, she stooped down and looked into the sepulchre and she saw two angels in white, sitting, one at the head, and one at the feet, where the body of Jesus had been laid. They say to her, 'Woman, why weepest thou?' She saith to them, 'Because they have taken away my Lord and I know not where they have laid Him.' When she had thus said, she turned herself back and saw Jesus standing, and she knew not that it was Jesus. Jesus saith to her, 'Woman, why weepest thou? Whom seekest thou?' She thinking that it was the gardener, saith to Him. 'Sir, if thou hast taken Him hence, tell me where thou hast laid Him and I will take Him away.' Jesus saith to her, 'Mary.' She turning saith to Him, 'Master.'" [1]

This was the first apparition of the Saviour, a reward to the converted sinner for her marvellous, unswerving faith and her sincere, unaffected repentance.

In accordance with the practice in the early centuries of the Church, the newly converted Christians who had been

[1] John xx, 11-16.

baptized on Holy Saturday and had been vested in robes of white during the octave of the Easter feast-days, resumed today their customary clothing. Saint Augustine addressed these neophytes on one occasion and thus admonished them,—"Today's feast brings to a close the solemn observance of the Easter season, and you lay aside the garments which you have been wearing and which typify the radiant brightness of your soul. But in changing from the white symbolic outward vesture, bear in mind to keep unstained the vesture of your soul."

These words of Saint Augustine have a deep significance for us. The last echoes of the triumphant Easter hymns are dying away in the distance, but the effects of our spiritual resurrection will still remain in our souls.

"Grant, we beseech Thee, O Almighty God, that we who have completed the observance of the paschal festival may enjoy the fruits of Thy resurrection in our daily lives on earth and in our future lives in heaven."

SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.

DOCILITY.

"At that time, Jesus said to the Pharisees, I am the good Shepherd. The good Shepherd giveth His life for His sheep; but the hireling, and he that is not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, seeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep and flieth; and the wolf catcheth and scattereth the sheep; and the hireling flieth because he is a hireling, and he hath no care for the sheep. I am the good Shepherd; and I know Mine and Mine know Me. As the Father knoweth Me, and I know the Father, and I lay down My life for My sheep. And other sheep I have, that are not of this fold; them also must I bring, and they shall hear My voice, and there shall be one fold, and one Shepherd." John x, 11-16.

THE parable of the good shepherd teaches the children of the Church to follow the guidance of superiors with docility. "Blessed are the obedient," says Saint Francis de Sales, "because God will not permit them to lose the pathway which leads to their Father's home." The obedient recognize the voice of a superior as the voice of God, and they readily and graciously observe all directions. "My sheep hear My voice: and I know them, and they follow Me. And I give them life everlasting; and they shall not perish forever, and no man shall pluck them out of My hand."[1]

Two brief anecdotes illustrate respectively the blessings which accompany immediate compliance with the wish of a superior, and the results which follow a tardy correspondence.

A member of a religious community was busily engaged in writing, and his superior directed him to do something else.

[1]John x, 27, 28.

Without even waiting to finish the word which he was at that moment forming, he left immediately to do as he was told. On returning to his manuscript, he was amazed to find that it had been entirely completed during his absence.

The second story concerns Saint Francis of Assisi and a member of his community named Brother Juniper. The Brother delayed in carrying out a request of the saint until after he had finished planting a tree in the garden adjoining the monastery. The sapling had already been placed in the ground and had been covered with earth. Only a few moments were required to pack the soil solidly about the roots, and yet Saint Francis reproved the Brother for his tardy obedience, and a malediction was placed on the tree. The tree never grew, but for many years remained exactly the same, testifying eloquently even by its muteness that God wishes immediate and willing obedience from us all.

* * *

For thirty years, the Son of God lived in obscurity in the little village of Nazareth. He worked as a common laborer under the direction of a man to whom He was infinitely superior. This example of docility and humility teaches the disciples of Christ to cultivate these two precious virtues.

We may sanctify our daily actions by obedience to the will of God, for in this way we are relieved of all responsibility in the court of the Judge before Whom all of us must one day appear. He who is obedient is always joyful, even if the carrying out of the instructions of a superior involves action contrary to his own judgment.

Docility works miracles. It is said that Saint Columbanus entered the infirmary of his monastery one day and requested the sick to assist him in gathering the harvest. Those who

responded to his invitation and hastened to work suddenly found themselves entirely restored to perfect health.

Saint Benedict directed Placidus to walk out on the lake and save Maurus, who was engulfed in the waters. Placidus obeyed at once and was miraculously able to save his companion.

We may have been disobedient and may have wandered far from the sheepfold. Let us harken once more to the voice of the Shepherd and return to Him, and joy without end will be ours.

"O God, Who by the humility of Thy Son has lifted up a fallen world, grant to Thy faithful people perpetual gladness. Thou hast saved them from the calamities of never-ending death in order that Thou mayest insure for them everlasting joys!"

THIRD SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.

TRUE JOY.

"At that time, Jesus said to His disciples, A little while, and now you shall not see Me: and again a little while, and you shall see Me: because I go to the Father. Then some of His disciples said one to another, What is this that He saith to us, A little while, and you shall not see Me; and again a little while, and you shall see Me; and because I go to the Father? They said therefore, What is this that He saith, A little while? We know not what He speaketh. And Jesus knew that they had a mind to ask Him: and He said to them, Of this do you inquire among yourselves because I said. A little while, and you shall not see Me, and again a little while, and you shall see Me? Amen, amen, I say to you, that you shall lament and weep, but the world shall rejoice; and you shall be made sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy. A woman when she is in labor hath sorrow, because her hour is come; but when she hath brought forth the child, she remembereth no more the anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world. So also you now indeed have sorrow, but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man shall take from you." John xvi, 16-22.

YOU shall lament and weep, but the world shall rejoice," [1] are the words of Jesus to His disciples. Poverty, suffering and persecution are the portion of Christ's friends today as they have always been the inseparable consorts of His followers down through all the ages of the Church's history. "You shall be made sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy." [2] The suffering lasts only for a short time, but the joy will endure forever.

1John xvi, 20.
2John xvi, 20.

Those who are now experiencing the delights of worldly pleasures and whose thirst for further indulgence never seems to be assuaged, are plunging headlong into an eternity of retribution. "O death, how bitter is the remembrance of thee to a man that hath peace in his possessions!"[1] This one little word, "death," is enough to chill the heart of the sinner, to draw away the smile from his face, to drive the sleep from his eyes and to render worthless his every treasure. But to the faithful followers of the Master, tribulation means consolation, and suffering sustained for Jesus brings only gladness of soul.

"Dearly beloved," exhorts Saint Peter in the epistle read in the Mass today, "I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims (on earth) to refrain yourselves from eternal desires which war against the soul."[2] We are whirling through this world at a rapid pace. The things which we are passing should not concern us, for this world is not our true country; nor shall we require the things of the world when we enter the gates of death. "We have not here a lasting city, but we seek one that is to come."[3]

The runner hastening to break the tape does not delay, nor does he look to the side. He presses eagerly onward. Nothing about him distracts him. And so must it be with the soul striving for the mastery, seeking to gain an incorruptible crown. Nothing that we see in this world merits our consideration; for to the light of our true country, our eyes must be sensitized. There is nothing that should hold us back. "Nothing should disturb us," concludes Saint Theresa, "and nothing should discourage us. Everything in this world comes to an end. God, alone, is changeless, and God, alone, suffices."

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[1] Ecclesiasticus xli, 1.
[2] I St. Peter ii, 11.
[3] Hebrews xiii, 14.

In the second book of Machabees, the story is told of the martyrdom of seven young Hebrew boys, sons of the same mother. The first six brothers suffered the most atrocious torments whose severity gradually forced life from their bodies without, however, forcing cries from their lips. These sufferings were endured in the presence of their heroic mother. Bravely did she exhort every one of them: "I know not how you were formed in my womb, for I neither gave you breath, nor soul, nor life, neither did I frame the limbs of every one of you. But the Creator of the world that formed the nativity of man, and that found out the origin of all, He will restore to you again in His mercy both breath and life, as now you despise yourselves for the sake of His laws." [1]

The youngest of the seven brothers had not as yet been put to death, and the king attempted by promises of riches and by flattery to turn him against the "laws of his fathers," and to make him his friend. "But when the young man was not moved with these things, the king called the mother, and counselled her to deal with the young man to save his life. And when he had exhorted her with many words (in Greek) she promised that she would counsel her son. So bending herself towards him, mocking the cruel tyrant, she said in her own language (Hebrew): 'My son, have pity upon me, that bore thee and nourished thee, and brought thee up unto this age. I beseech thee, my son, look upon heaven and earth, and all that is in them, and consider that God made them out of nothing, and mankind also. So thou shalt not fear this tormentor, but being made a worthy partner with thy brethren, receive death, that in that mercy I may receive thee again with thy brethren.' While she was yet speaking these words, the young man said: 'For whom do you stay? I will

[1] II Machabees vii, 22, 23.

not obey the commandment of the king, but the commandment of the law, which was given us by Moses.—For my brethren, having now undergone a short pain, are under the covenant of eternal life.—But I like my brethren offer up my life and my body for the laws of our fathers.'—Then the king, being incensed with anger, raged against him more cruelly than all the rest, taking it grievously that he was mocked. So this man also died undefiled, wholly trusting in the Lord. And last of all, after the sons, the mother also was consumed." [1]

"Mother to be admired above measure, and worthy to be remembered by good men, who beheld her seven sons slain in the space of one day, and bore it with a good courage, for the hope that she had in God!" [2] This is the encomium pronounced by Holy Scripture on this woman who was for her children two times a mother,—mother in their birth on earth and mother in their birth into heaven.

"O God, Who showest the light of Thy truth to the wanderers so that they may be able to return to the way of salvation, grant unto all who profess themselves to be Christians, grace to reject the things that are opposed to that name, and to follow after the things which befit it." [3]

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[1] II Machabees vii, 25-41.
[2] II Machabees vii, 20.
[3] Prayer in the Mass.

FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.

THE BATTLE.

"At that time, Jesus said to His disciples, I go to Him that sent Me; and none of you asketh Me, Whither goest Thou? But because I have spoken these things to you, sorrow hath filled your heart. But I tell you the truth; It is expedient to you that I go; for if I go not, the Paraclete will not come to you, but if I go, I will send Him to you. And when He is come, He will convince the world of sin, and of justice, and of judgment. Of sin, because they believed not in Me; and of justice, because I go to the Father, and you shall see Me no longer; and of judgment, because the prince of this world is already judged. I have yet many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now; but when He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He will teach you all truth; for He shall not speak of Himself; but what things soever He shall hear, He shall speak, and the things that are to come He shall show you. He shall glorify Me because He shall receive of Mine, and shall show it to you." John xvi, 5-14.

SINCE the world persecuted Jesus, it is not surprising that it persecutes His followers. "Son," admonishes Holy Scripture, "when thou comest to the service of God, stand in justice and in fear, and prepare thy soul for temptation." [1] Those who are leading bad lives will loathe those who are leading good lives with all the bitterness of which human hearts are capable. They consider that they are perfectly free to think, believe and act as they will, but they do not wish to extend this benevolence to others.

Jesus devoted His entire life to the service of the Jewish people, and then this people expressed its gratitude by malign-

[1] Ecclesiasticus ii, 1.

ing and cursing Him. "Away with this Man," they cried out, "and release unto us Barabbas." [1] "Crucify Him, crucify Him," [2] they shrieked, and the Lord was "delivered up to their will." [3] No life could have had a more tragic epilogue, no mission could have had a more disastrous end.

Christ is the prototype of the Christian, and the life of Christ is the grand exemplar of His faithful follower. Since the disciple of Christ is actuated by holy purposes, he does not seek the plaudits of the world. Rebukes, not praises, are his usual portion, and humiliations instead of honors are his common gains. He climbs a mount called Calvary, and on its summit he perceives a cross.

The Christian need not, however, have the slightest doubt of his ultimate decisive conquest in the battle that is raging. He need not be "afraid of them who kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do." [4] The voice of Holy Scripture tells him, "Fear ye not them that kill the body, and are not able to kill the soul." [5] Consider the birds of the air, "for they sow not, neither do they reap, neither have they storehouses nor barn, and God feedeth them." [6] Consider that not one of them shall fall to the ground without God's knowledge; and how much is he "more valuable than they?" [7]

Neither the little flurries of life nor the severe tempests occasion any ruffling of the Christian's peace of soul. No enemy is powerful enough to snatch away from him the grace of God. No man is rich enough to buy from him this treasure

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[1] Luke xxiii, 18.
[2] Luke xxiii, 21.
[3] Luke xxiii, 25.
[4] Luke xii, 4.
[5] Matthew x, 28.
[6] Luke xii, 24.
[7] Luke xii, 24.

which alone and by itself can make him happy, and without which all the riches in the world are dross. The Holy Spirit is always in his soul, assisting and sustaining him in battle. Sooner or later, he sees his cause triumphant and, sometimes, triumphant even in this world.

He knows that his defeated Master was ultimately and supremely the Victor. He recalls that Christ's victory was delayed, but that the delay made victory all the more stupendous. He is patient, therefore, and eventually he sees the truth make progress, justice crowned and evil crushed.

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At this time of the year, the Church observes the feast of Saint John Nepomucene. A zealous and apostolic priest, a preacher of extraordinary renown, a man of exceptional ability, Saint John was appointed chaplain to the royal family of Bohemia. For some little time, Wenceslaus IV, King of Bohemia, had been leading a scandalous life. Unwilling to accede to the entreaties of his wife to be a virtuous man and a good king, and, at the same time, irritated by the constant rebuke offered to him by the evident integrity of the queen, King Wenceslaus sent for Saint John Nepomucene and demanded information from him concerning the sacramental confessions of his wife. Against this sacrilegious outrage, Saint John protested with all the vehemence of his priestly soul and with all the energy of his manly character. He scornfully spurned every attempt to wheedle him, and contemptuously disregarded every threat. Tortures and death were to him not necessarily enemies and evils, for in this situation he regarded them as friends and blessings.

Leaving the presence of the king, Saint John made a visit to a celebrated shrine of the Blessed Virgin just outside of the city of Prague. He knew that his last battle was near at hand, and he knew also that he needed the help of his

Blessed Mother. When he returned to the city in the evening, the king summoned him once more and gave him this ultimatum: "You will speak or you will be hurled into the river!" Saint John's answer was not a word, but a smile. The sanctity of the seal of the confessional was, of course, dearer to him than life. The Moldau River passes through Prague, and that night its flowing waters washed away forever the secrets of the Patron Saint of the Confessional.

The impious tyrant thought that his shameful deed of desecration would remain buried forever in the darkness, but that night a mysterious moving light was seen upon the river, drifting slowly towards the bank. When the people approached, they discovered the body of the martyr, and the nefarious deed of their licentious sovereign became known. The spirit of God, which had sustained the saint in his struggle, revealed to all the world the wickedness of the king and the holiness of his victim.

Saint John was martyred on the twentieth day of March in the year 1393. His body was entombed in the Cathedral of Prague, where it reposes in honor today. When his tomb was opened three hundred and twenty-six years later in order to secure some relics for veneration, it was noted that the tongue of this heroic servant of God was still incorrupted in death, as it had been incorruptible in life.

"O God, Who dost make of one accord the minds of the faithful, grant that they may lovingly observe all Thy commandments and desire the fulfillment of all Thy promises, so that in the midst of the changes of this life, their hearts may remain always fixed in that place where true joys abide."[1]

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[1]Prayer in the Mass.

FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.

PRAYER.

"At that time, Jesus said to His disciples, Amen, amen I say to you, if you ask the Father anything in My name, He will give it you. Hitherto you have not asked anything in My name: ask and you shall receive, that your joy may be full. These things I have spoken to you in proverbs: the hour cometh when I will no more speak to you in proverbs, but will show you plainly of the Father. In that day, you shall ask in My Name; and I say not to you that I will ask the Father for you, for the Father Himself loveth you, because you have loved Me, and have believed that I came out from God. I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world: again I leave the world, and go to the Father. His disciples say to Him, Behold, now Thou speakest plainly, and speakest no proverb. Now we know that Thou knowest all things, and Thou needest not that any man should ask Thee: by this we believe that Thou camest forth from God." John xvi, 23-30.

HITHERTO you have not asked anything in My name."[1] There is a possibility that these words of Christ may refer to us. Some of us may not know how to pray. We may imagine that we are praying just because we kneel before the altar and even though our thoughts are wandering far away. Words of praise and adoration ripple easily from our lips, but our minds and hearts record no corresponding notes. It is not surprising, therefore, that God does not harken to our voices as centuries ago he did not hear the Jews. "This people honoureth Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me."[2]

[1]John xvi, 24.
[2]Matthew xv, 8.

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It is only when we find ourselves in the depths of some great sorrow or seriously involved in material or social difficulties that we call on God with fervor. Can we with much assurance in such circumstances expect God to hear us? Can we reasonably look for God to help us if we do not work for His glory,—if we do not implore the one and all-important good which He wishes us to seek, our own soul's salvation?

Christ came on earth to redeem all mankind, and it is in token of this mission that He bears the name of Saviour. When, therefore, we say our prayers we should endeavor, as much as is in our power, to keep our thoughts on God. We should ask our heavenly Father, through the love which He has for His Divine Son, to bestow on us His choicest blessings, to make us rich in the possession of those treasures which will endure for eternity. "Amen, amen, I say to you, if you ask the Father anything in My name, He will give it you."[1] Then will our prayers be heard, and we shall feel the sweet enchantment and tranquil happiness which come to those who surrender completely to Jesus.

We must pray and perseveringly pray, even when it seems to us that we have been forsaken and that God has left us in the darkness. We must never give up hope. We must never lose our confidence in Him.

"Hear my prayer, O Lord, and my supplication,"[2] cried the royal Psalmist. "Bow down Thy ear to me: make haste to deliver me. Be Thou unto me a God, a protector, and a house of refuge, to save me."[3]

And in answer to our pleadings we hear the gentle reassuring voice of Jesus,—"Ask, and it shall be given you: seek, and you shall find: knock, and it shall be opened to you. For

[1] John xvi, 23.
[2] Psalm xxxviii, 13.
[3] Psalm xxx, 3.

every one that asketh, receiveth: and he that seeketh, findeth: and to him that knocketh, it shall be opened. Or what man is there among you, of whom if his son shall ask bread, will he reach him a stone? Or if he shall ask him a fish, will he reach him a serpent? If you then being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children: how much more will your Father Who is in heaven, give good things to them that ask Him?"[1] Despite dark, dreary, seemingly never-ending days of waiting, we may still pray on, serenely certain of eventual triumph.

In the hour of His agony, Christ warned his apostles against fatigue and discouragement in prayer. "Watch ye, and pray,"[2] He exhorted, as if to say that if you pray you shall certainly conquer, if you weary you shall certainly fail.

In his epistles to the faithful of Rome, of Thessalonica and of Ephesus, Saint Paul emphasizes this same thought,—"Instant in prayer,"[3] to the Romans; "Pray without ceasing,"[4] to the Thessalonians; "praying at all times,"[5] to the Ephesians.

"Let us tremble, therefore, and pray," concludes Saint Alphonsus,—"he who does not tremble and pray always will not be saved."

* * *

The people of Israel and Israel's king Achab had sinned, and the prophet Elias had predicted their chastisement. "As the Lord liveth the God of Israel, in Whose sight I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to the words of my mouth."[6]

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[1] Matthew vii, 7-11.
[2] Matthew xxvi, 41.
[3] Romans xii, 12.
[4] I Thessalonians v, 17.
[5] Ephesians vi, 18.
[6] III Kings xvii, 1.

All the rivers and streams became dry. The former fertile land burned into a desert under the fierce rays of the sun. Famine,—cruel, ravishing, killing beast,—stalked through the country, and all Israel drooped in desolation. For three years this ghastly, deadly scourge held undisputed sway, and still the people and their king clung to their idols.

After many days, the word of the Lord came to Elias in the third year, saying: "Go and show thyself to Achab, that I may give rain upon the face of the earth." [1] Then, at the prayer of Elias, God performed a miracle, which together with their afflictions, convinced Achab and his people that the prophets of Baal were deceivers, and these false prophets were, therefore, repudiated and slain. "And Elias went up to the top of Carmel, and casting himself down upon the earth," [2] he began to pray. "And he said to his servant: 'Go up, and look toward the sea.' And he went up, and looked, and said: 'There is nothing.' And again he said to him: 'Return seven times.' And at the seventh time, behold, a little cloud arose out of the sea." [3] Elias then sent his servant to Achab to warn him to prepare his chariot and seek shelter, lest the rain prevent him. And even as he spoke,—"behold the heavens grew dark, with clouds, and wind, and there fell a great rain," [4] which gave life and verdure to all the earth.

The apostle Saint James makes the following comment on this passage from the Old Testament: "Elias was a man passable like unto us: and with prayer he prayed that it might not rain upon the earth, and it rained not for three years and six months. And he prayed again, and the heaven

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[1] III Kings xviii, 1.
[2] III Kings xviii, 42.
[3] III Kings xviii, 43-44.
[4] III Kings xviii, 45.

gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit."[1] "Pray one for another, that you may be saved. For the continual prayer of a just man availeth much."[2]

The prayer which the priest recites after the offertory in the Mass for today expresses the thoughts of all, "Accept, O Lord, the prayers of Thy servants together with the oblation of sacrifice, that through these acts of devotion we may one day obtain the glory of Paradise."

[1] St. James v, 17, 18.
[2] St. James v, 16.

FEAST OF THE ASCENSION.

TRIUMPH.

"At that time, Jesus appeared to the eleven as they were at table: And He upbraided them with their incredulity and hardness of heart, because they did not believe them who had seen Him after He was risen again. And He said to them, Go ye into the whole world, and preach the Gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be condemned. And these signs shall follow them that believe. In My name they shall cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; they shall take up serpents; and if they shall drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them, they shall lay their hands upon the sick, and they shall recover. And the Lord Jesus, after He had spoken to them, was taken up into Heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of God. But they going preached everywhere, the Lord working withal, and confirming the word with the signs that followed." Mark xvi, 14-20.

JESUS Christ conquered death by His resurrection. He opened the doors of Paradise by His ascension. He took with Him into heaven our humanity and placed it at the right hand of His Eternal Father, thus according new glory to our poor, human nature.

Jubilant on this feast day, the Church exults in her liturgy and with joyous song returns thanks to Almighty God in the Preface proper to the Mass for today. "After the resurrection," says this solemn eucharistic prayer of praise, "Christ showed Himself very openly to all His disciples and in their sight was raised up to heaven in order to make us partakers of His divinity. And, therefore, with the angels and archangels, with the thrones and dominations, and with all the

array of the heavenly host we sing a hymn to His glory and unceasingly proclaim, 'Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Hosts! The heavens and earth are full of Thy glory! Hosanna in the highest! Blessed is He Who cometh in the name of the Lord, Hosanna in the highest!' "

The glory which is to be ours is in no sense a worldly distinction. On this point there can be no doubt. Even up to the time of the ascension, the apostles did not fully appreciate that the kingdom founded by Christ was to be a spiritual kingdom. The epistle read in the Mass today relates that just before the ascension the apostles asked Christ, "Lord, wilt Thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?" [1] And Christ's answer explained that His kingdom was essentially spiritual and that the power which they were to receive was "the power of the Holy Ghost." [2] They were to become martyrs in His cause, "in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and Samaria, and even to the uttermost part of the earth." [3]

These words of Christ apply to us as well as they applied to the apostles. Our glory will come as did theirs, by means of humiliation and suffering. Christ said, "Take up My yoke upon you, and learn of Me, because I am meek and humble of heart." [4]

Saint Augustine meditates on this precept of the Master and observes that Christ did not say to learn from Him to do big things, or to work miracles. Christ did not come to make us wonder-workers. He came to teach us to be meek and humble. "If we would wish, therefore, to become great," concludes the saint, "we should commence to consider ourselves small." If we would construct magnificent buildings, we

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[1] Acts of the Apostles 1, 6.
[2] Acts of the Apostles 1, 8.
[3] Acts of the Apostles 1, 8.
[4] Matthew xi, 29.

should prepare most solid substructures. As the height of the buildings which we purpose to erect increases, we should make provision for deeper supports. Now, the pinnacle which we aspire to reach is the highest, and, consequently, the foundations on which we should build must be the lowest. If we would reach God, we must be humble for "humility goeth before glory." [1]

Even though the journey which we are making is a difficult one, we should not lose our courage. The Lord will not leave us alone. He has promised His help and His graces.

* * *

The people of Israel at the command of Moses went forth out of Egypt and passed "by the way of the desert," [2] in their quest of the promised land. God Himself was their guide, going "before them to show the way by day in a pillar of a cloud, and by night in a pillar of fire." [3] At length they reached the shores of the Red Sea, where they pitched their tents and encamped to rest for the night. Then came the enemy. Pharao, the King of Egypt, repented because he had permitted the Israelites to escape from the bondage of slavery. "The heart of Pharao and of his servants was changed with regard to the people and they said, 'What meant we to do, that we let Israel go from serving us?' So he made ready his chariot, and took all his people with him. And he took six hundred chosen chariots and the captains of the whole army." [4]

When the Israelites saw the Egyptians behind them, they were seized with a great fear and they cried out to the Lord to help them. Moses reassured them, telling them not to fear, that the Lord was with them. And at the same time,

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[1] Proverbs xv, 33.
[2] Exodus xiii, 18.
[3] Exodus xiii, 21.
[4] Exodus xiv, 5-7.

the pillar of cloud which had gone before them, went back and stood between their camp and the army of the Egyptians. Moreover, the cloud gave light to the people of Israel, but it made the night darker for the Egyptians so that they could not see nor stir on account of the gloom.

Then Moses, commanded by God, stretched his hand over the sea, and immediately the waters divided and stood like a wall on either side, leaving a dry road between for the children of Israel to pass over, and they went in through the midst of the sea.

At the break of day, the Egyptians pursued them and "went in after them, and all Pharao's horses, his chariots and horsemen through the midst of the sea." [1] Suddenly a great tempest arose, "and the Lord said to Moses, 'Stretch forth thy hand over the sea, that the waters may come again upon the Egyptians, upon their chariots and horsemen.'" [2] And behold the divided waters came together again, swallowing up Pharao and his whole army, so that not one of the Egyptians escaped. "But the children of Israel marched through the midst of the sea upon dry land." [3]

Thus did the Lord by a wondrous miracle deliver the Hebrews from the hands of the Egyptians. Thus, also, shall we be delivered from our enemies if we walk always with God. Just as the Israelites were saved by closely following the guidance of the pillar of cloud and the pillar of fire, so also shall we be saved by closely following the principles which God has placed before us. Thus shall we pass safely through all the dangers and difficulties of the perilous journey which we are making to our heavenly home where, finally, after all

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[1] Exodus xiv, 23.
[2] Exodus xiv, 26.
[3] Exodus xiv, 29.

of life's vicissitudes are over, we shall enjoy eternal contentment and everlasting peace.

"Grant, we beseech Thee, O Almighty God, that believing Thine only-begotten Son, our Redeemer, to have ascended into heaven on this day, we, too, may dwell spiritually in heavenly places." [1]

[1] Prayer in the Mass.

SUNDAY AFTER THE ASCENSION.

FIDELITY.

"At that time, Jesus said to His disciples, When the Paraclete cometh, Whom I will send you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, Who proceedeth from the Father, He shall give testimony of Me: And you shall give testimony, because you are with Me from the beginning. These things have I spoken to you, that you may not be scandalized. They will put you out of the synagogues: Yea, the hour cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doth a service to God. And these things will they do to you, because they have not known the Father, nor Me. But these things I have told you, that, when the hour shall come, you may remember that I told you." John xv, 26—xvi, 4.

THE true Christian is necessarily a soldier. On the day of his enlistment in Christ's army, his duties are assigned to him. He is pledged to eternal fidelity to God, his great Captain; and he sets out valiantly to battle against the enemy. As time passes, he finds himself occasionally, and sometimes even frequently, in a position when loyalty to God and to Christian principles requires unusual courage. He is obliged on these occasions to make an uncompromising choice between devoted service to his leader and surrender to the foe.

The loyalty of a soldier is not tried in times of peace. It is tried in times of war. It is the stress and turmoil of the combat that brings into relief this characteristic note of a noble warrior. Loyalty is the virtue which on the one hand resists the traitorous insinuations of the defeatist, and on the other hand repels the open advances of acknowledged enemies.

When we hear evil spoken of the Church, we must remember that she is our mother and that it is our right and

privilege to defend her. Sometimes we hear her maligned by those whom the world calls great, but as true soldiers and devoted sons we are not deterred by this circumstance from daring everything to protect our mother's good name. Christ does not wish timorous followers, nor does His Church need trembling apostles. Christ wants soldiers who fight; His Church needs loyal campaigners. "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee the crown of life,"[1] says the "Revelation of Jesus Christ."[2]

The life which we are leading evidences the character of the army in which we are enrolled. It is also shown by our friends and our companions. It is revealed by the places which we frequent. It is proclaimed by the books and magazines which we read. All these things constitute different articles of our military equipment. They are distinctive emblems of the cause to which we are devoted. They are infallible signs which differentiate clearly the soldiers of Christ from the soldiers of the world. If we are ashamed to serve Christ now, Christ will not acknowledge us among His friends when the battle of life is over. If we are numbered among the enemies of Christ during the conflict, we shall be obliged to remain with them at the end of the struggle. "Every one therefore," says Christ, "that shall confess Me before men, I will also confess him before My Father Who is in heaven."[3]

We hear occasional discussions of new dogmas, or, sometimes, conjectures about present ones. We learn of the proposal of new creeds with modernistic tenets, and we read of startling doings by sporadic wonder-workers. We observe attacks on the old faith of our fathers, and the sacred things we love to venerate condemned. These are times for us to

[1] Apocalypse ii, 10.
[2] Apocalypse i, 1.
[3] Matthew x, 32.

act. These are opportunities for service which must not be declined. These are occasions which we, as devoted soldiers, must take to rally to the support of our Leader. Let us, therefore, stand staunchly. Let us raise aloft our foreheads, our foreheads which have been signed with the seal of Christ. Let us plunge fearlessly into battle. Let us resist the onslaughts of the enemy with the irresistible weapons of truth. Let us repulse these attacks with all the impetuous zeal of conviction. As long as life lingers in our bodies we will never succumb to these false and cowardly assaults.

* * *

The army of the Philistines was encamped in Sunam opposing the forces of Israel entrenched on Mount Gelboe. The commander of the Israelites was Saul, and Saul's heart was heavy as he contemplated the powerful cohorts arrayed against him. "And he consulted the Lord," [1] but he was favored with no response. Then Saul, unmindful of his God and forgetful of his duties, had recourse to superstition. He sought the assistance of a spiritualistic medium. "And Saul said to his servants, 'Seek me a woman that hath a divining spirit, and I will go to her and inquire by her.' " [2]

The servants were amazed. All of them knew that Saul in the days of his fervor had decreed the routing out of all magicians as adjuncts of the devil. But, nevertheless, they answered him, saying, "There is a woman that hath a divining spirit at Endor." [3] Saul then put off his regal diadem and also laid aside his royal garments, in order to disguise himself. With two companions he set out, "and they came to the woman by night." [4]

1I Kings xxviii, 6.
2I Kings xxviii, 7.
3I Kings xxviii, 7.
4I Kings xxviii, 8.

Now it so happened that God decreed that the woman, although under the influence of the spirit of lies, would on this occasion speak the truth. "Divine to me by thy divining spirit," said the unknown visitor, "and bring me up him whom I shall tell thee." [1] But the woman refused, saying, " 'Thou knowest all that Saul hath done, and how he hath rooted out the magicians and soothsayers from the land. Why then dost thou lay a snare for my life, to cause me to be put to death?' And Saul swore unto her by the Lord, saying, 'As the Lord liveth there shall no evil happen to thee for this thing.' And the woman said to him, 'Whom shall I bring up to thee?' And he said, 'Bring me up Samuel.' " [2]

The woman then concealed herself behind a veil and began the practice of her art. Suddenly, a loud voice was heard and the woman called out, "Why hast thou deceived me, for thou art Saul?" [3] for God had made known the truth to her. "Fear not," the king with choking voice assured her, "what hast thou seen?" [4] "And she said, 'An old man cometh up, and he is covered with a mantle.' And Saul understood that it was Samuel." [5] And in the presence of the prophet who had spoken to him of God so many times during his life, Saul, ashamed, "bowed himself with his face to the ground." [6] "And Samuel said to Saul, 'Why hast thou disturbed my rest, that I should be brought up?' And Saul said, 'I am in great distress; for the Philistines fight against me, and God is departed from me, and would not hear me.'—And Samuel said, 'Why asketh thou me, seeing the Lord has departed from thee;

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[1] I Kings xxviii, 8.
[2] I Kings xxviii, 9-11.
[3] I Kings xxviii, 12.
[4] I Kings xxviii, 13.
[5] I Kings xxviii, 14.
[6] I Kings xxviii, 14.

—and He will rend thy kingdom out of thy hand—because thou didst not obey the voice of the Lord.—And the Lord also will deliver Israel with thee into the hands of the Philistines.' "[1] The next day, the Philistines attacked the Israelites and put them to flight, and Saul, in despair, killed himself by falling on his sword.

Thus perished Israel's first king, a man endowed by God with His choicest gifts and strengthened with abundant graces, a man raised by God from the most lowly circumstances to the preeminence of the throne, a man who had been selected as a general in the army of the Great King, but a man who, despite all these prerogatives, ended his life as a miserable traitor.

God's justice, even in this life, overtook Saul, and his death serves as a terrible warning to deserting soldiers.

"Omnipotent and eternal God, deign to concede to us Thy children the blessings of always maintaining a devout affection for Thee, so that with sincere and faithful hearts we may always be loyal to Thy majesty." [2]

[1] I Kings xxviii, 15-19.
[2] Prayer in the Mass.

PENTECOST SUNDAY.

PEACE.

"At that time, Jesus said to His disciples, if any one love Me, he will keep My word, and My Father will love him, and We will come to him, and will make Our abode with him. He that loveth Me not, keepeth not My words: and the word which you have heard is not Mine, but the Father's Who sent Me. These things have I spoken to you, abiding with you: but the Paraclete, the Holy Ghost, Whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring all things to your mind, whatsoever I shall have said to you. Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you; not as the world giveth, do I give unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, nor let it be afraid. You have heard that I said to you, I go away, and I come unto you. If you loved Me, you would indeed be glad, because I go to the Father, for the Father is greater than I. And now I have told you before it come to pass, that, when it shall come to pass, you may believe. I will not now speak many things with you; for the prince of this world cometh, and in Me he hath not anything. But that the world may know that I love the Father, and as the Father hath given Me commandment, so do I." John xiv, 23-31.

A BEAM of joy penetrated the shadows of sadness which hovered as a pall over the Last Supper. Christ was soon to take leave of His apostles. The plans for His apprehension and condemnation had been perfected. One member of His own little group was about to betray Him. The symbol of love was about to be debased into a symbol of treachery. Christ was to be delivered to His enemies.

The Saviour was ready for these last bitter hours of suffering. He was ready for the humiliation of mock arraignment before the tribunals of injustice. He willingly prepared

to drink the bitter chalice of excruciating torment and ignominious death awaiting Him. All these things Christ welcomed as opportunities to demonstrate His intense love for those whom He came to redeem.

But before the last great act of supreme sacrifice was to be consummated, Christ wished to reassure His faithful apostles. He saw them disconsolate and disheartened, and with all the tender solicitude of a father about to bid his children a last farewell, Christ told them to take courage and not to be disturbed. "I will not leave you orphans," [1] He tells them, for "the Paraclete, the Holy Ghost, Whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things.—Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you." [2]

These consoling words from the lips of the Master brought joy to the hearts of His apostles. Christ told them to have confidence in Him, that in His Father's house there were many mansions, and that He was going home to prepare a place for His friends.

The joys of this world do not give real satisfaction. They are often occasions of bitterness and remorse. They are sometimes the cause of harrowing retribution. "If you will not hear Me," saith the Lord, "nor do all My commandments, if you despise My laws, and contemn My Judgments,—I also will do these things to you. I will quickly visit you with poverty, and burning heat, which shall waste your eyes, and consume your lives.—I will set My face against you, and you shall fall down before your enemies, and shall be made subject to them that hate you.—I will also go against you with opposite fury, and I will chastise you with seven plagues for your sins.—I will destroy your high places, and break your idols.—

[1] John xiv, 18.
[2] John xiv, 26, 27.

And I will scatter you among the Gentiles, and I will draw out the sword after you, and your land shall be desert, and your cities destroyed." [1]

These inspired words of Holy Writ have found their verification in all the states that have gone to war against God. These words have a direct application to nations, but they have just as definite a significance for individuals. It is possible that we may realize the truth of this statement from experiences in our own lives. We may, unfortunately, have been troubled at some time or another by the anguish, the bitterness and the restlessness which torments a person in sin.

Today, however, it is ours to know the sweetness, the joy and the peace of the children of God. We may apply to ourselves the words of Saint Paul, writing to the Colossians. "Let the peace of Christ rejoice in your hearts," says the Apostle. "Let the word of Christ dwell in you abundantly, in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms, hymns, and spiritual canticles, singing in grace in your hearts to God." [2]

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There lived in Caesarea in Palestine a certain Roman centurion named Cornelius. Cornelius was a pagan, but he was, nevertheless, a devout and God-fearing man. He gave generous alms to the poor, and faithfully recited his prayers. One day an angel appeared to him and said, "Thy prayers and thy alms are ascended for a memorial in the sight of God. And now send men to Joppe, and call hither one Simon, who is surnamed Peter.—He will tell thee what thou must do." [3]

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[1] Leviticus xxvi, 14-33.
[2] Colossians iii, 15, 16.
[3] Acts x, 4-6.

Then the angel disappeared. Cornelius at once carried out the instructions which had been given to him and dispatched three good men to Joppe.

On the following day, as these men were drawing near the city, Peter went up to the housetop to say his prayers before the mid-day meal. While he was praying, he was rapt in ecstasy, and the Spirit of God spoke within Him, saying, "Behold three men seek thee. Arise, therefore, get thee down and go with them, doubting nothing; for I have sent them." [1] Peter went down immediately and met the men whom Cornelius had sent.

On the morrow, Peter set out for Caesarea with the men and with some of his own companions. He was met by Cornelius, who told him his vision and all that the angel had said. Whereupon, he announced to Cornelius and his household the doctrine of Jesus Christ. He told them of Christ's life, His death and His resurrection. He told them that by the name of Christ all those who believe in Him receive remission of their sins. While Peter was speaking these words, the Holy Ghost descended on them all and they all received holy Baptism and became members of the infant Church. They were all brothers, all believers and followers of Jesus Christ.

"O God, Who on this day didst instruct the hearts of the faithful by the light of the Holy Spirit, grant us by the same Spirit to do the things that are right and ever to rejoice in His consolation." [2]

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[1] Acts x, 19, 20.

[2] Prayer in the Mass.

FEAST OF THE HOLY TRINITY.

JEHOVA.

"At that time, Jesus said to His disciples, All power is given to Me in heaven and in earth. Going, therefore, teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you; and behold I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world." Matthew xxviii, 18-20.

TODAY is the great feast of the Catholic faith, the feast of the first mystery of the Christian religion, the feast of the Holy Trinity. It is the day on which the Church wishes her children to prepare in a special way for the last great day of their lives, when the veil of earthly shadows shall be dispersed before the "Brightness like that of the noon-day,"[1] and reveal to them the glorious vision of the Triune God. "We see now through a glass in a dark manner; but then, face to face."[2]

The mind of man, which is incapable of complete understanding of even the ordinary mysteries of nature, trembles in utter helplessness before the thought of Him "Who hath numbered the sand of the sea and the drops of rain and the days of the world."[3] "O, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and of the knowledge of God!" exclaimed Saint Paul. "How incomprehensible are His judgments, and how unsearch-

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[1]Job xi, 17.

[2]I Corinthians xiii, 12.

[3]Ecclesiasticus i, 2.

able His ways! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? Or who hath been His counsellor?—For of Him, and by Him, and in Him, are all things; to Him be glory forever!"[1]

"Now the Catholic faith is this," as we profess in the Creed of Saint Athanasius, "that we worship one God in Trinity and Trinity in Unity, neither confounding the Persons nor dividing the Substance. For there is one Person of the Father, Another of the Son, Another of the Holy Ghost. But the Godhead of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, is all one; the glory equal, the majesty co-eternal." From this God, one and three, all things have received existence. And if for a single moment of time the power of God did not sustain them in being, they would at once cease to exist. But even though the entire universe, the earth, the sun, the moon and the stars were to be annihilated, all would disappear without any loss to Almighty God; since God Himself is the first cause and source of every being. God alone exists by the necessity of His very nature. God has no beginning; God has no ending; God always is!

The years of man pass quickly. They flow onwards as the waters of a river, never to return. Man's life wears out as wear out the things which he uses. He is standing on the crumbling cliff of time, and the roar of his rapidly loosening foothold is always sounding in his ears. God alone is immutable, God alone is eternal. He is as a sun which knows neither rising nor setting. "O Lord, Thou foundest the earth; and the heavens are the works of Thy hands. They shall perish, but Thou remainest; and all of them shall grow old like a garment, and as a vesture Thou shalt change them, and they shall be changed, but Thou art always the selfsame and Thy years shall not fail."[2] "God alone is great," exclaimed Saint

[1] Romans xi, 33-36.

[2] Psalm ci, 26-28.

Augustine, "Who entwinest the haughty with the tentacles of old age, and they in their pride remain unconscious of their steady enchainment. God alone is great, Who in accordance with relentless laws gradually draws the shades of darkness and of blindness over the souls of persistent, remorseless sinners." "God is Light, and in Him there is no darkness." [1]

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One day, while Moses was feeding the sheep of Jethro, his father-in-law, he drove his flock into the desert and came as far as Mount Horeb. Suddenly, he noticed a brilliant flame issuing from the midst of a bush, but the bush itself was not burning. And Moses drew near to the bush in order to discover the reason why the bush was not being consumed. As he approached, he heard the voice of the Lord crying out to him, saying: "Come not nigh hither, put off the shoes from thy feet; for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground. —I am the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob." [2]

Moses, in awful reverence, covered his face and prostrated himself in adoration, "for he durst not look at God." [3] "And the Lord said to Him: 'I have seen the affliction of My people in Egypt, and I have heard their cry.—And knowing their sorrow, I am come down to deliver them out of the hands of the Egyptians,—and I will send thee to Pharao, that thou mayst bring forth My people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt.'—Moses said to God: 'Lo, I shall go to the children of Israel and say to them: The God of your fathers hath sent me to you. If they should say to me: What is His name? What shall I say to them?' God said to Moses: 'I AM WHO

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[1] St. John i, 5.
[2] Exodus iii, 5, 6.
[3] Exodus iii, 6.

AM.' He said: 'Thus shalt thou say to the children of Israel: HE WHO IS, hath sent me to you.—This is My name forever, and this is My memorial unto all generations.' " [1]

Meditate, Christian soul, on this name, the name of the Most High God,—"I AM WHO AM." "I am He Who exists of Himself; He Who is." This is the proper name of God and the meaning of the word "Jehova." God is Being, the only Being that truly and fully "is." God is Being itself, eternal, self-existent, independent and infinite, without beginning, end or change, and the source of all other beings.

Even the pagans understood this truth, for on the magnificent temple at Delphi they carved in the marble this dedication,—"Thou art!" But the pagans did not know of the Trinity of Persons in the Unity of Substance, that "the Father is God, the Son God, and the Holy Ghost God. And yet they are not three Gods but one God." [2]

Nor could the pagans have comprehended the sublime meaning of the truth enunciated by Saint John,—"God is Charity." [3]

God is a fire of love which burns and does not consume. God is Goodness, Mercy, Sweetness and Riches. God is the treasure and comfort of souls.

"Almighty and eternal God, by Whose gift Thy servants, in the confession of the true faith, acknowledge the glory of the eternal Trinity and adore the Unity in the power of His majesty, we beseech Thee that in the firmness of the same faith we may ever be defended from all adversities." [4]

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[1] Exodus iii, 7-15.
[2] Creed of Saint Athanasius.
[3] I St. John iv, 4.
[4] Prayer in the Mass.

FEAST OF CORPUS CHRISTI.

"At that time, Jesus said to the multitudes of the Jews: My flesh is meat indeed, and My blood is drink indeed. He that eateth My flesh, and drinketh My blood, abideth in Me, and I in him. As the living Father hath sent Me, and I live by the Father, so he that eateth Me, the same also shall live by Me. This is the bread that came down from heaven. Not as your fathers did eat manna and are dead. He that eateth this bread shall live forever." John vi, 56-59.

THE feast of the sacred body and blood of our divine Saviour is a day of great rejoicing for our Holy Mother the Church. Her altars sparkle with the brilliance of a myriad of lights and are gorgeous with the blossoms of Nature's choicest gardens. And in the midst of all this beauty and splendor, encircled by the gentle waftings of fragrant incense, the immaculate Host, the center of all honor and devotion, is triumphantly enthroned.

This Sacrament is indeed the Bread of Angels, the Sacred Banquet at which we partake of the body and blood, soul and divinity of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. It is our Lord Himself Whom we receive and Whose sacred passion we commemorate. Our souls are filled with grace and happiness, harbingers of the delights prepared for us in the life that is to come.

The epistle read in the Mass for this feast is taken from the inspired words which Saint Paul addressed to the faithful of Corinth. "For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, that the Lord Jesus, the same night in which He was betrayed, took bread, and giving thanks,

broke, and said: 'Take ye, and eat; this is My body, which shall be delivered for you: this do for the commemoration of Me.' In like manner also the chalice, after He had supped, saying: 'This chalice is the new testament in My blood: this do ye, as often as you shall drink, for the commemoration of Me.' For as often as you shall eat this bread, and drink the chalice, you shall show the death of the Lord, until He come. Therefore whosoever shall eat this bread, or drink the chalice of the Lord unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and of the blood of the Lord. But let a man prove himself: and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of the chalice. For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh judgment to himself, not discerning the body of the Lord." [1]

These words of the Apostle contain a wealth of meaning. They indicate the great reverence which we should have for the Blessed Sacrament. They recall to our minds the fact that Christ instituted the Holy Eucharist as a perpetual reminder of the death which He endured to save us. It was not possible for Him to have given any greater proof of His love for us than by suffering and dying to redeem us.

Every time that Mass is celebrated this sacrifice is commemorated. Just before the priest takes the host in his sacred hands for the consecration, he is reminded by the words of the liturgy that it was on the very vigil of His death that Christ instituted the Blessed Eucharist. On that night, the fire of divine charity burst forth with an all-consuming intensity to inflame the hearts of men with love for Him Who was dying to save them. On that night, the night on which He was betrayed by one of His chosen companions, the torments of the scourges and the thorns, the brutal crushing of the blunt nails, all the agonies of the cross, seemed small to the heart of Jesus in comparison to the value of our souls.

[1] Corinthians, xi, 23-29.

Christ humiliated Himself still more by concealing His sacred presence under the appearances of bread and wine. Thus are we, whom Christ loved so dearly, permitted to communicate directly with the source of all grace and strength. Thus, too, are we privileged to have Jesus united with us as the Guest of our souls all the days of our lives.

We human beings are creatures who are extremely sensitive to the reciprocation of affection. We should have no difficulty, therefore, in loving Jesus, Who has loved us,—loved us even to the death of the cross. Kneeling in His sacred presence, with sincerity and humility let us pledge to our ever loving Saviour the purest love of our hearts.

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During the time of the prophet Jeremias, all Judea was in desolation. The gates of the holy city had fallen to the ground in sign of mourning, and Jerusalem's children were dying of starvation. The chosen people cried out in anguish for mercy, but the Lord said to the prophet, "Pray not for this people for their good. When they fast, I will not hear their prayers; and if they offer holocausts and victims, I will not receive them."[1] "We acknowledge, O Lord, our wickedness," replied the prophet, "because we have sinned against Thee." But we beseech Thee "for Thy name's sake—break not Thy covenant with us."[2] And the Lord replied, "If Moses and Samuel shall stand before Me, My soul is not towards this people. Cast them out from My sight, and let them go forth."[3] For who shall have pity on thee, O Jerusalem, or who shall bemoan thee, or who shall go to pray for thy peace? 'Thou hast forsaken Me,' saith the Lord, 'thou art

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[1]Jeremias xiv, 11, 12.
[2]Jeremias xiv, 20, 21.
[3]Jeremias xv, 1.

gone backward: and I will stretch out My hand against thee, and I will destroy thee: I am weary of entreating thee.' " [1]

The people then prayed to God and implored Him to fulfill His promise and send them a Redeemer for they knew that no man nor no saint could deliver them from their sins.

Now Jesus has come. In the days of His mortal life, He offered to His heavenly Father His body and blood, and He left us the Blessed Eucharist to perpetuate this sacrifice. We may draw near to this fountain of grace, and although our sins and the sins of others may merit the severest kind of divine retribution, we can know on the merciful authority of God Himself that our prayers will be favorably received and graciously answered.

"O God, Who in this wonderful Sacrament hast left us a memorial of Thy passion, grant us, we beseech Thee, so to venerate the sacred mysteries of Thy body and blood that we may constantly experience in ourselves the fruit of Thy redemption." [2]

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[1] Jeremias xv, 5, 6.

[2] Prayer in the Mass.

SUNDAY WITHIN THE OCTAVE OF CORPUS CHRISTI.

DEVOTION.

"At that time, Jesus spoke to the Pharisees this parable: A certain man made a great supper, and invited many. And he sent his servant, at the hour of supper, to say to them that were invited, that they should come, for now all things are ready. And they began all at once to make excuse. The first said to him, I have bought a farm, and must needs go out and see it; I pray thee, hold me excused. And another said, I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to try them; I pray thee, hold me excused. And another said, I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come. And the servant returning, told these things to his lord. Then the master of the house being angry, said to his servant, Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in hither the poor, and the feeble and the blind, and the lame. And the servant said, Lord, it is done as thou hast commanded, and yet there is room. And the lord said to the servant, Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled. But I say unto you, that none of these men that were invited shall taste of my supper." Luke xiv, 16-24.

THE love which we are required to have for Jesus is not a mere perfunctory thing. It is a strong, active affection, which prompts us to renounce every other interest that in any way conflicts with our friendship for Christ. When Jesus calls us, we must at once respond. Prompt and continual service constitutes the essence of stalwart, unswerving devotion.

The great supper is prepared and the banquet hall is made ready. Jesus calls us to His altars: "Come, My children, you are tired and hungry. You have need of comfort and repose." "Come to Me, all you that labor, and are bur-

dened, and I will refresh you."[1] "I am the Bread of Life. He that cometh to Me shall not hunger; and he that believeth in Me shall never thirst."[2] Nevertheless, some of us who are invited to Christ's Supper answer Him with a refusal. "We shall go another time," we tell Him. "Just at present it is not possible for us to leave. Business cares and other troubles occupy our thoughts, and we must first attend to them." Thus, with various excuses, we seek to cover up the real reason for not responding to the Master's gentle summons. Thus we strive to hide the weakness and the unstable charater of our love. "It is an infallible law," observes Saint Gregory the Great, "that the nearer we are to the Lord the greater we appreciate the delights of His friendship, and, conversely, the further that we are away from Him, the greater is our indifference." The disinclination which tepid souls have for the Blessed Eucharist is the strongest indication, therefore, that they are in the greatest need of help.

It is possible for us to persist in our refusal and decline the invitation of the Master. Indisposition gradually congeals into aversion. The net of worldly cares draws tighter and its meshes close in finer, firmer weave. Meanwhile, time is passing. Christ continues for a span to invite us to His banquet, but gradually these calls become less frequent and more faint. The soul continues to forget Christ, and Christ finishes by leaving the soul.

The significance of the parable contained in the Gospel for this Sunday is startling. The lesson that it teaches is terrifying. Those who did not accept the first invitation to the supper were not admitted later. The master did not call them twice. He preferred to have other guests.

There are many souls that are ready to answer the first invitation. In the streets and avenues of the city, in the highways and lanes of the towns, there is an immense throng of

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[1]Matthew xi, 28.

[2]John vi, 35.

guests that are predestined to enter the house of the Lord and partake of His Bounty. They are to fill our Father's house, and it is possible that we who are among His previously chosen companions may be ultimately left outside.

* * *

The people of Israel, under the leadership of Josue, were journeying toward the promised land. They had reached the banks of the Jordan. It was the month of Nisan, the month of the harvest, and the melting snows on Mount Lebanon had swollen the stream with turbulent waters. It was impossible to ford the river, and the Israelites pitched their tents and for three days they camped by the side of the Jordan. Heralds then proclaimed through the midst of the camp, "When you shall see the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord your God, and the priests of the race of Levi carrying it, rise you up also, and follow them as they go before." [1]

"And Josue said to the people, 'Be ye sanctified, for to-morrow the Lord will do wonders among you.' And he said to the priests, 'Take up the Ark of the Covenant, and go before the people.' And they obeyed his commands, and took it up and walked before them." [2] And the people followed the priests.

As soon as the priests, carrying the Ark, arrived at the bank of the Jordan and their feet touched the edge of the waters, "the waters that came down from above stood in one place, and swelling up like a mountain, were seen afar off from the city that is called Adom, to the place of Sarthan; but those that were beneath, ran down into the sea of the wilderness (which now is called the Dead Sea) until they wholly failed." [3] "Then all the people passed over through

[1] Josue iii, 3.
[2] Josue iii, 5, 6.
[3] Josue iii, 16.

the channel that was dried up,"[1] together with the army of forty thousand fighting men and they encamped before the city of Jericho. Josue then commanded the priests to leave the Jordan, and "the waters returned into the channel, and ran as they were wont before."[2]

We are also pilgrims on our journey to the Promised Land. It is possible for us to be impeded in our progress by the whirling torrents of passion plunging across our path. But the priests of the New Law are carrying the Ark of the New Testament, - the Blessed Sacrament. Christ invites us to pass. He assures us of safety and salvation. We tremble at our past lukewarmness and hesitancy, but we know that Christ wants us even now.

This is the prayer which the Church offers up for us in the Mass for today: "Grant us, O Lord, a continual and an abiding fear and love of Thy Holy Name, knowing that Thou dost not leave without Thy guidance those whom Thou dost support upon the firm foundation of Thy love."

[1]Josue iii, 17.
[2]Josue iv, 18.

THIRD SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

THE LOST SHEEP.

"At that time, the publicans and sinners drew near unto Him to hear Him. And the Pharisees and scribes murmured, saying: This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them. And He spoke to them this parable, saying: What man of you that hath an hundred sheep, and if he shall lose one of them, doth he not leave the ninety-nine in the desert, and go after that which was lost until he find it? And when he hath found it, lay it upon his shoulders rejoicing; and coming home call together his friends and neighbors, saying to them: Rejoice with me, because I have found my sheep that was lost? I say to you, that even so there shall be joy in heaven upon one sinner that doth penance, more than upon ninety-nine just who need not penance. Or what woman having ten groats, if she lose one groat, doth not light a candle and sweep the house and seek diligently until she find it? And when she hath found it, call together her friends and neighbors, saying: Rejoice with me, because I have found the groat which I had lost. So I say to you, there shall be joy before the angels of God upon one sinner doing penance." Luke xv, 1-10.

IT is not the fault of the Shepherd that the sheep is lost. The sheep fold is closed and protected. It is carefully watched by day and guarded also at night. No, it is the fault of the sheep who has wandered apart from the flock on the way to green pastures; wandered away, perhaps, dreaming of meadows still more alluring and of springs with more crystalline waters. Poor, deluded sheep! He is lost in the midst of briers and brambles. Instead of fertile fields, he sees dry, barren wastes; instead of cool, sparkling fountains, he finds, hot, muddy pools. Weak, lonely sheep, trembling, away from the Shepherd! He has no safeguards from the assaults of

wild beasts. He has no guides to point the way back to safety. Alone in the great open spaces, the lost sheep feels solitude's coldness. He starts at the sound of his own footsteps. He is frightened by the pall of his own shadow. He cries out in despair for someone to save him, and the echo mocking his accents is the only response that he hears.

O, good sheep, who are within the sheep fold, rejoice in the care of your Shepherd! Bless the enclosure which surrounds you and firmly resolve never to forsake its protective restraint.

"I have gone astray like a sheep that is lost," [1] said the Psalmist. "But in my trouble I cried to the Lord, and He heard me." [2] And Isaias proclaims, "All we like sheep have gone astray, every one hath turned aside into his own way." [3] And the prophetic fifth Evangelist goes on to describe how the Good Shepherd hath taken upon Himself "the iniquity of us all." [4] "But He was wounded for our iniquities, He was bruised for our sins. The chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and by His bruises we are healed." [5]

Jesus Christ is the Good Shepherd. He has come down from heaven to earth to find the sheep that are lost. In searching for them, His hands and His feet have been wounded. His flesh has been torn, and His head has been pierced with thorns. He has not come to punish the sheep nor to force them back to the fold. He has come to take them in His arms, to carry them back to their home, and to tenderly watch them and keep them.

A mother who loses one of her children seems to forget

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[1] Psalm cxviii, 176.
[2] Psalm cxix, 1.
[3] Isaias liii, 6.
[4] Isaias liii, 6.
[5] Isaias liii, 5.

all the others. And when she finds the one who had been lost, she seems to be more happy in the possession of this loved one than she was before in the company of all the others. Thus it is also in heaven. There is more joy at the penance done by one sinner "than upon ninety-nine just who need not penance."[1]

Giovanni Papini is one of the Church's recent converts. Leaving the sheep fold with the idea of exploring by himself most mysterious places, he soon became bewildered. Entangled in a maze of doubts, he finally ended by denying God. During those days of fever and of pride, he tells us, he offended Christ in divers grievous ways. For six years he led this life, a life that dissipated and devastated every force, a life whose every breath was a pang of unhappiness and of biting bitterness. One day he felt constrained to begin to write the "Life of Christ," a book which has proved to be an inspiration and a source of comfort to many souls, but which seems even now to the author to be but a weak atonement for his past excesses.

"More than once after Thy resurrection, Thou hast appeared to living souls!" Thus, with burning eloquence, does Papini address the Master, his Good Shepherd. "Thou hast appeared," he continues, "to the hermits in the midst of the deserts and to the monks at prayer in their convents. The saints on the mountains have seen Thee and have heard Thee. They have asked for nothing but the grace of death to possess Thee. Thou wert the light and the voice which struck Paul on the road to Damascus; Thou wert the fire and the blood in the cave that seared Francis; Thou wert the perfect love in the cells of Theresa and Catherine! Since Thou hast returned for them, why not return also for us? If these saints had the

[1]Luke xv, 7.

consolation of seeing Thee because of the merits of their exceptional love, may we not appeal to Thee on the grounds of our abject need?" And Christ came also for Papini.

Christ will come to save every soul that is lost in darkness, and He will bring him back into the light of the Kingdom of God. Thus is it possible for the lost sheep to be found. Thus may he gain again the safety of the sheep fold.

"The lost sheep cannot return," as Saint Augustine says, "by his own efforts. He cannot find the way himself. He must return on the shoulders of the Shepherd. He can lose the way himself, but, once lost, he cannot return unless the Shepherd in His mercy follows him and brings him home.

"O God, the Protector of all who hope in Thee, without Whom no one is strong, no one is holy, multiply Thy mercy upon us, that, with Thee for our ruler and leader, we may so regard the good things of this life as not to lose those which are eternal." [1]

[1] Prayer in the Mass.

FEAST OF THE HOLY APOSTLES PETER AND PAUL.

THE HOLY FATHER.

"At that time, Jesus came into the quarters of Caesarea Philippi, and He asked His disciples, saying, Whom do men say that the Son of Man is? But they said, Some, John the Baptist, and other some, Elias, and others Jeremias or one of the prophets. Jesus saith to them, But whom do you say that I am? Simon Peter answered, and said, Thou art Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answering, said to him, Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jona, because flesh and blood hath not revealed it to thee, but My Father Who is in heaven: and I say to thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build My Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it; and I will give to thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind upon earth, it shall be bound also in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth, it shall be loosed also in heaven." Matthew xvi, 13-19.

THE distant country of Caesarea Philippi, near the extreme limits of Palestine, was the place which the Master selected to reveal to His apostles the marvellous manner in which His Church was to be established and organized. Nature had furnished a most fitting background for the enactment of this sublime drama. Jesus and His apostles are in the midst of a great plain, stretching in seemingly never-ending vistas in all directions. Far in the distance, they can see Mount Hermon silhouetted in majestic grandeur against a cloudless sky.

Jesus had asked His apostles for a profession of faith: "Whom do you say that I am?" [1] And with all the fervor of

[1] Matthew xvi, 15.

his impetuous heart Saint Peter had given this response, "Thou art Christ, the Son of the living God."[1] No more fitting answer could have been made, for Saint Peter's words epitomize all the hopes of the Old Testament, and at the same time express the most consoling doctrine of the New Law. "Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jona, because flesh and blood hath not revealed it to thee, but My Father Who is in heaven."[2]

It was then that Jesus made known the character of His Church, - My Church is a divine society which in My name and in My faith will include all nations. This Church shall triumph over the powers of darkness and over time itself. It will be built not on shifting sands, but on living rock, against which the waves of persecution and hatred will storm in vain. Simon, son of John, this living rock on which My Church will stand is none other than thyself! Therefore, Simon, I change thy name to Peter, which is "rock", and "upon this rock I will build My Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."[3]

Not long before this time, Jesus had spoken of the "foolish man who built his house upon the sand, and the rain fell and the floods came, and the winds blew, and they beat upon that house, and it fell, and great was the fall thereof."[4] The wise man "built his house upon a rock, and the rain fell and the floods came, and the winds blew, and they beat upon that house, and it fell not, for it was founded on a rock."[5]

If you wish, Christian soul, to confound those who do not recognize the Catholic Church but who at the same time pro-

[1] Matthew xvi, 16.
[2] Matthew xvi, 17.
[3] Matthew xvi, 18.
[4] Matthew vii, 26, 27.
[5] Matthew vii, 24, 25.

fess themselves to be disciples of Jesus, ask them the kind of a foundation on which their churches are built.

The Church of Christ must stand upon a rock. It must have a supreme head, to whom is given power to bind and to loose upon earth, and whose decisions are ratified in heaven. It must have within its organization the successors to the apostles, and, above all, the successor to the prince of the apostles, Saint Peter.

The successor to Saint Peter is the Pope. The true Church of Jesus Christ must have the Pope at its head. Where the Pope is, there is the true Church, a structure build on a rock. Where the Pope is not, there is a false church and the structure is built on sand.

Communion with the See of Peter is the supreme test of the identity of the Church of Christ. Away from this contact, all is chaos. Various sects divide and subdivide, and then they divide still further. Races, nations, and different groups within races and nations split into myriad parts, and present at once a spectacle which is both discordant and sad.

The Church of Christ must be essentially and miraculously one,-"that they all may be one, as Thou, Father, in Me, and I in Thee," [1] in the words of Christ. The Church must be one in faith, in government, and in sacraments. There must be one flock and one Shepherd.

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We should have the deepest affection for our Holy Father the Pope. We should pray as earnestly for him as the early Christians prayed for Saint Peter. Herod had inaugurated the fiercest sort of persecution. Saint James had been put to death, and Saint Peter had been cast into prison. "But prayer was made without ceasing by the Church unto God for him." [2]

[1] John xvii, 21.

[2] Acts xii, 5.

On the very night that Herod had determined to bring Saint Peter forth from prison to meet his death, while "Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains, and the keepers before the door kept the prison, behold an angel of the Lord stood by him; and a light shined in the room and he striking Peter on the side raised him up, saying, 'Arise quickly.' And the chains fell off from his hands, and the angel said to him, 'Gird thyself and put on thy sandals.' And he did so. And he said to him, 'Cast thy garment about thee and follow me.' "[1]

While they were thus escaping, the apostle did not credit his own senses, and thought that he was dreaming. But when they had passed by the first and second watch and the iron door leading out to the city had opened before them, and the angel had left Peter alone, the apostle, "coming to himself said, 'Now I know in very deed, that the Lord hath sent His angel and hath delivered me.' "[2]

"O God, Who in giving to Blessed Peter, Thine apostle, the keys of the kingdom of heaven, didst confer on him the power of binding and of loosing, grant that by the help of his intercession, we may be delivered from the bonds of our sins."[3]

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[1] Acts xii, 6-8.

[2] Acts xii, 11.

[3] Commemoration of St. Peter in the Mass for the Feast of St. Paul.

FEAST OF THE VISITATION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY.

THE VISITATION.

"And Mary rising up in those days, went into the hill country with haste, into a city of Juda; And she entered into the house of Zachary, and saluted Elizabeth. And it came to pass, that when Elizabeth heard the salutation of Mary, the infant leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost; and she cried out with a loud voice and said: Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb. And whence is this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? For behold, as soon as the voice of thy salutation sounded in my ears, the infant in my womb leaped for joy. And blessed art thou that hast believed, because those things shall be accomplished that were spoken to thee by the Lord. And Mary said: My soul doth magnify the Lord; and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour." Luke i, 39-47.

AFTER four days of difficult journeying from Nazareth, the Blessed Virgin arrived at Hebron in the mountains of Judea. The angel Gabriel had already announced the glad tidings of the Incarnation and had also told Mary of the fact that her cousin Elizabeth had "conceived a son in her old age," [1] and was soon to become a mother. For this reason, the Blessed Virgin had come with haste into the hill-country, a distance of over seventy miles, in order to visit Saint Elizabeth, to afford her the comfort and consolation of her presence and to assist her in the performance of her duties.

[1] Luke i, 36.

No one in the world save Elizabeth and Zachary, her husband, was aware of the approaching birth of Christ's precursor, and Mary's visit was, therefore, an entirely unexpected one. As the Blessed Virgin crossed the threshold of the little mountain home, and uttered the customary words of affectionate greeting, "Peace be with you," Saint Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost.

At that very moment, the mystery of the Incarnation was revealed to Saint Elizabeth, the mystery which had been accomplished a few days before in Nazareth when the Blessed Virgin had bowed her head and had replied to the angel, "Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it done to me according to thy word." [1]

Then, with heart and soul overflowing with emotion, Elizabeth greeted Mary with the same exultant cry with which the angel had saluted her at the time of the Annunciation, - "Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb." [2]

Mary had brought Jesus to Elizabeth, and the coming of Jesus meant joy, holiness, the fullness of every grace, and the consolation of every blessing both for Elizabeth and for her unborn son. In the epistle read in the Mass today, the Church repeats the beautiful words of the Canticle of Canticles, typifying the eager longing which the soul should have for union with Christ, "Behold, my beloved cometh leaping over the mountains, skipping over the hills.—Arise, make haste, my lōve, my dove, my beautiful one, and come! For winter is now past, the rain is over and gone. The flowers have appeared in our land.—Arise, my love, my beautiful one, and come!" [3]

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[1]Luke 1, 38.

[2]Luke 1, 42.

[3]Canticle of Canticles ii, 8-13.

"Blessed art thou that hast believed."[1] In the household of Elizabeth there was one who did not at once accept the word of God with simple, unquestioning faith. The Gospel of Saint Luke tells us the story. At the time when Herod was king of Judea, there was a priest named Zachary who served in the temple of Israel. He was a just man and carefully observed all the commandments. He and his wife had often prayed that God would bless them with a son, but their prayer seemed to remain unanswered; and now "they both were well advanced in years."[2]

It so happened that Zachary went to Jerusalem, as it was his time to perform priestly offices in the temple. He entered the sanctuary to offer incense on the altar while the people prayed without; and, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him, "standing on the right side of the altar of incense."[3]

Zachary was troubled at the sight of the angel, but the angel reassured him, saying, "Fear not, Zachary, for thy prayer is heard; and thy wife, Elizabeth, shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name 'John.' And thou shalt have joy and gladness, and many shall rejoice in his nativity. For he shall be great before the Lord, and he shall be filled with the Holy Ghost even from his mother's womb. And he shall convert many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God to prepare unto the Lord a perfect people."[4]

Zachary, however, did not understand. He wanted some explanation. He did not believe the angel. "Whereby shall I know this," he said, "for I am an old man and my wife is

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[1]Luke i, 45.
[2]Luke i, 7.
[3]Luke i, 11.
[4]Luke i, 13-17.

advanced in years."[1] "And the angel answering, said to him, 'I am Gabriel, who stand before God; and am sent to speak to thee, and to bring thee these good tidings. And behold thou shalt be dumb, and shalt not be able to speak until the day wherein these things shall come to pass, because thou hast not believed my words, which shall be fulfilled in their time.'"[2] Then the angel disappeared.

Meanwhile, the people outside in the main body of the temple were expecting Zachary and wondered at his long delay. When he at length appeared, he could not speak to them except by signs, and he remained thus afflicted until after the birth of Saint John.

On the other hand, Mary was proclaimed "blessed" because she believed the word of the Lord. She did not hesitate one single moment. As soon as the angel announced to her that she was to become the Mother of God while still remaining a virgin, she surrendered herself completely and immediately with all the faith of her mind and with the entire love of her heart.

The instant that Mary became the Mother of God, she also became our Mother. From the time that "the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us,"[3] Mary became the treasurer of God's graces and the gentle, kind dispenser of His blessings. From that day, she has a mission to visit us as she visited Saint Elizabeth long ago. And as Mary brought Jesus and joy and peace to the dwellers in the little cabin in the hills of Judea, so also will Mary bring Jesus and joy and peace to us. We, too, shall see her beautiful face, and

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[1] Luke 1, 18.
[2] Luke 1, 19, 20.
[3] John 1, 14.

shall hear the music of her sweet and soothing voice. We, too, shall greet the coming of Mary to console us and to assist us with the joyful and affectionate salutation of the angel,—"Blessed art thou among women." [1]

"Grant unto Thy servants, we beseech Thee, O Lord, the gift of heavenly grace, that to us, to whom the childbirth of the Blessed Virgin hath been the beginning of salvation, the observance of her visitation may bring an increase of peace." [2]

[1] Luke i, 42.
[2] Prayer in the Mass.

FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

MEEKNESS.

"At that time, Jesus said to His disciples, Except your justice abound more than that of the scribes and Pharisees, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. You have heard that it was said to them of old (in the law of Moses), Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill, shall be in danger of the judgment. But I say to you, that whosoever is (even) angry with his brother, shall be in danger of the judgment; and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca (a word of extreme insult), shall be in danger of the council; and whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire. If therefore thou offer thy gift at the altar, and there thou remember that thy brother hath anything against thee, leave thy offering before the altar, and go first to be reconciled to thy brother; and then coming thou shalt offer thy gift." Matthew v, 20-24.

JESUS teaches meekness and mercy. When the apostles were inclined to invoke punishments on sinners, Jesus counselled them to be kind and forgiving. Christ taught this doctrine of meekness not only by His words; He taught it even more eloquently by His example. When Judas came to betray Christ, the Master addressed him as "friend." When the servant of the priest gave Him a blow, Jesus bore no resentment. When the most iniquitous of the Jews condemned Him and the most depraved of the executioners nailed Him to the cross, the first words which the crucified Saviour uttered were words of prayer to His heavenly Father to pardon them for their crimes.

This picture of the long and patiently suffering Redeemer, praying for those who caused His pains and anguish, burns

with striking vividness before us. Is it possible for us any longer to do or to wish injuries to our brother when we consider this sublime example of divine meekness? The fact that our brother has wronged us gives us no right to hate him or to wish him evil. It gives us only the right to pardon him. God has pardoned us for our offences, and He asks us in return to forgive those who have harmed us. This thought is expressed in a most powerful manner in the words of the apostle Saint John: "If any man say, 'I love God,' and hateth his brother, he is a liar." [1] God positively will not dwell within a soul which nurtures rancor and bitterness. If we wish, therefore, to be worthy of the name we bear, the name of Christian, we should place the kiss of Christian peace and friendship on the forehead of our enemy.

In the epistle of the Mass for this Sunday, the Church repeats for us the inspiring exhortation which the Prince of the apostles made to the first Christians, "Be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another, being lovers of the brotherhood, merciful, modest, humble, not rendering evil for evil, nor railing for railing, but contrariwise, blessing; for unto this are you called, that you may inherit a blessing." [2]

It was this spirit of charity and divine benevolence which united the early Christians in a body having one heart and one soul. Such admirable harmony existing among the brethren appeared almost miraculous, especially in the midst of a world drunk with pagan excesses and torn asunder with fierce internecine warfare.

In these days of implacable hatreds and of greedy usurpations of the rights of others, we should strive to exemplify as conspicuously as possible Christian meekness and Christian kindness. We may begin by eliminating all sharpness in our

[1] St. John iv, 20.
[2] Peter iii, 8-9.

speech. Conversations should be even and gentle. If we are disturbed, we should not speak. If others turn on us in anger, we should reply with calmness. "A mild answer breaketh wrath." [1]

What difference does it make even if right is on our side? Charity is the only important consideration. "An ounce of charity is of more avail," says Cardinal Bellarmine, "than a hundred wagon loads of reasons." We may be justly aggrieved, but if we humble ourselves for the love of Christ before those who have wronged us, we have succeeded in winning a victory over our pride and as a recompense we shall merit the consolation of receiving a plenitude of heavenly blessings and the possible consolation also of gaining the soul of our enemy for God.

There is a story told in one of the chapters of the "Little Flowers of Saint Francis," which emphasizes in a charming way the lesson of this Gospel. The poor little saint of Assisi, the saint of birds and of beasts, is represented in conversation with a fierce wolf, whose ravages had caused terror to the inhabitants of the village of Gubbio. With no weapons for defence, but trusting in God, Saint Francis made the sign of the cross as the wolf rushed to seize him. The beast at once became docile and obedient, and was never known to have molested anyone again. The change which was wrought in the wolf by the power of God and the kindness of Saint Francis is but a type of the difference which will take place in our characters if we learn to meet injustice and bitterness with Christlike meekness and composure.

"O God, Who hast prepared good things unseen for them that love Thee, fill our hearts with the fervor of Thy love, that loving Thee in all things and above all things, we may attain Thy promises, which surpass all desire."

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[1] Proverbs xv, 1.

SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

OUR DAILY BREAD.

"At that time, when there was a great multitude with Jesus, and had nothing to eat, calling His disciples together He saith to them, I have compassion on the multitude, for behold they have now been with Me three days, and have nothing to eat; and if I shall send them away fasting to their homes they will faint in the way, for some of them came from afar off. And His disciples answered Him, From whence can any one fill them here with bread in the wilderness? And He asked them, How many loaves have ye? who said, Seven. And He commanded the people to sit down on the ground. And taking the seven loaves, giving thanks He broke, and gave to His disciples to set before them; and they set them before the people. And they had a few little fishes, and He blessed them, and commanded them to be set before them. And they did eat, and were filled; and they took up that which was left of the fragments, seven baskets: and they that had eaten were about four thousand: and He sent them away." Mark viii, 1-9.

WE are hearing the same words today that faithful souls have heard repeated down through all the centuries of the Church's life. They are the words of Christ. "I have compassion on the multitude, for behold they have now been with Me three days, and have nothing to eat. And if I shall send them away fasting to their home, they will faint in the way; for some of them came from afar off."[1]

Christ satisfied the needs of those who were hungry by providing them with food. He asked His disciples to give up the bread which they had, and this, Christ took and distributed; and the hunger of the multitude was forthwith ap-

[1]Mark viii, 2, 3.

peased. Jesus asked His disciples for bread to give to others, and today the Master makes the same appeal to us.

Following in the wake of the most awful war that the world has ever known, a war whose frightful wounds in the bodies and in the souls of the various fighting nations are still fresh and bleeding, a war whose terrible effects must inevitably endure for years and years to come, we are obliged to hear despairing cries for bread coming from the throats of millions of destitute and starving people in every quarter of the globe. Even in our own dear country there is poverty and suffering. It is possible that in the very neighborhood in which we live there are fathers and mothers who are making desperate exertions to provide food enough to keep their children from experiencing the gnawing pangs of hunger, fathers and mothers who are making frantic efforts to save their loved ones from the ravages of the dreaded wolves of want that are yelping just outside their doorways. And if we raise our eyes and look beyond our borders, and more especially at the countries upon which the sun of victory did not smile, O the awful sight which greets our gaze! We see thousands upon thousands of emaciated, dying mothers stretching out their shaking, shrunken arms in supplication. Succor for themselves they do not ask. It is for their wretched, wasted babies that they plead. And as we gaze still farther towards the east we witness the appalling spectacle of veritable millions on the parched plains of the Volga waging an inevitably losing battle with slow and torturous death. To help them is everyone's duty, for every man worthy to be called a man, every Christian deserving of the name of Christian, every Catholic who is a Catholic, cannot refuse to help a fellow creature who is dying.

Christ has sanctified this impulse to which we as human beings, as Christians and as Catholics are bound to respond.

He has instructed us to see in our neighbor the image of God. He has told us that in this immense universal human family there are those who are especially dear to His Sacred Heart. These are the poor and the suffering. If we are good to them, we are pleasing to Christ and Christ will not forget us. "I was hungry, and you gave Me to eat," He tells us. "I was thirsty, and you gave Me to drink. I was a stranger, and you took Me in; naked, and you covered Me; sick, and you visited Me."[1] And then we shall ask, "Lord, when did we see Thee hungry, and fed Thee; thirsty, and gave Thee drink; and when did we see Thee a stranger, and took Thee in, or naked, and covered Thee, or sick and came to Thee?"[2] And Christ answering shall say to us, "Amen I say to you, as long as you did it to one of these my least brethren, you did it to Me."[3]

And on the contrary, if our neighbor is hungry and we do not give him bread, if we chill and harden our hearts to the needs of the languishing Jesus, if we indulge in extravagant luxuries while our brothers are dying of starvation, we are not leading truly Christian, Catholic lives.

"Weep in your miseries, ye rich men," cries out the apostle Saint James, "your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth-eaten. Your gold and silver is cankered and the rust of them shall be for a testimony against you, and shall eat your flesh like fire. You have stored up to yourselves wrath against the last days."[4]

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When Saint Vincent de Paul established organizations for the relief of the poor and for the assistance of the sick, the

[1] Matthew xxv, 35, 36.
[2] Matthew xxv, 37-39.
[3] Matthew xxv, 40.
[4] St. James v. 2, 3.

noblest women of Paris vied with one another to assist him. These "Ladies of Charity," as they were called, voluntarily deprived themselves of many things to which they had become accustomed and devoted all their energies and resources to the alleviation of poverty and distress. During the Thirty Years War, these heroic women worked continually and with marked success to mitigate the horrors and scourges of the conflict. "What an honor it is," exclaimed Saint Vincent de Paul, "to be able to visit Jesus Christ, to clothe Him, and to give Him food;" for this is what we do when we visit, clothe and feed Christ's poor. When we look at the poor and the sick, it is possible for us to experience occasional unpleasant reactions, but when we reflect that it is really Christ Whom we are visiting and Christ Whom we are helping, then our first feelings give place to sentiments of love and devotion.

Saint James says that "religion, clean and undefiled before God and the Father, is this: to visit the fatherless," [1] and the afflicted and to give them help. We must give to Christ if we hope to receive from Christ. The bread which we give to Christ for the poor will be multiplied a hundredfold like the bread which the disciples gave. We may feel sure that for our charity to our brethren we shall be abundantly recompensed with heavenly blessings and graces.

"Be propitious to our supplications, O Lord, and graciously accept the offerings of Thy people; grant that the prayers of none may be without effect and that what we ask in faith, we may effectually obtain." [2]

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[1] St. James 1, 27.

[2] Prayer after the Offertory in the Mass.

SEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

WORDS AND DEEDS.

"At that time, Jesus said to His disciples, Beware of false prophets, who come to you in the clothing of sheep, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. By their fruits you shall know them. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so, every good tree bringeth forth good fruit, and the evil tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can an evil tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit shall be cut down, and shall be cast into the fire. Wherefore by their fruits you shall know them. Not every one that saith to Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doth the will of My Father Who is in heaven, he shall enter into the kingdom of heaven." Matthew vii, 15-21.

WE find the most enlightening commentary on the Gospel for this Sunday in the Epistle of Saint James the Apostle. This epistle is known as the Catholic Epistle, because it was not addressed to the people of any particular city or to any definite person but to all the faithful in general. "What shall it profit, my brethren," writes Saint James, "if a man say he hath faith, but hath not works? Shall faith be able to save him? And if a brother or sister be naked and want daily food, and one of you shall say to them: 'Go in peace, be ye warmed and fed,' yet give them not those things that are necessary for the body, what shall it profit? So faith, also, if it hath not works, is dead in itself.—For even as the body without the spirit is dead; so also faith without works is dead." [1]

[1] St. James ii, 14-26.

In the kingdom of God, the things that count are not beautiful words nor deep sighs. The things that count are deeds.

"For if there shall come into your assembly a man having a golden ring, in fine apparel," says Saint James in the same epistle, "and there shall come in also a poor man in mean attire, and you have respect to him that is clothed with the fine apparel, and shall say to him, 'Sit thou here well,' but say to the poor man, 'Stand thou there,' or 'Sit under my footstool,' do you not judge within yourselves and are become judges of unjust thoughts? Harken, my dearest brethren: Hath not God chosen the poor in this world, rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which God hath promised to them that love Him? But you have dishonored the poor man." [1]

Meditate, Christian soul, and examine your conscience on this point. If you wish to belong to the fold of Christ, you must make your manner of living conform to the teachings of Christ; for otherwise, your professed Christianity is but hypocrisy. By your bleatings, you will be but dissembling the wolfish heart in your breast.

Such hypocrisy will avail you nothing. It will not help you in the estimation of your fellowmen, for men gauge the sincerity of speech by the character of action. They measure the value of a tree not from the abundance of its foliage, but from its yield of fruit. Much less will such duplicity avail you before God Who "searcheth all hearts and understandeth all the thoughts of minds." [2]

The Lord is the Shepherd Who recognizes the sheep not by their wool nor by their bleatings, but by the love which they have in their hearts for the Shepherd. He watches His sheep every moment; He judges their every action. He notices

[1] St. James ii, 2-6.

[2] Paralipomenon xxviii, 9.

every word and scrutinizes every motive, but He will not pronounce His final judgment until the span of earthly life has been completed.

If with real sincerity and generosity of soul you shall follow in the footsteps of the Master, victoriously overcoming the sinful allurements of the world, you shall find joy even in the midst of grief, and sweetness in bitter chalices.

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There is a story told of Saint Francis of Assisi in connection with a journey which he made to France with Brother Masseo, one of the members of the little company of his followers. When, in the course of their journey, they had come to a certain city, they were tired and hungry, and they went about the city begging for something to eat. Asking, as they did, in the name of God, they received several pieces of bread. Coming upon a flat stone near a gushing fountain, they prepared to refresh themselves with the bread and water. "O Brother Masseo," exclaimed Saint Francis, "we are not worthy of such a treasure." Saint Francis repeated this exclamation several times, and finally Brother Masseo asked, "Why do you call this frugal repast a treasure; we have neither home, nor table, nor servants nor eating utensils." "And this is precisely the reason that I call this banquet a treasure," rejoined Saint Francis, "because there is not a single thing arranged by the hand of man but instead everything has been prepared by the hand of God. God has given us this bread. He has found this rock for a table and has furnished us the clear, pure water from this spring." "Let us pray," continued Saint Francis, "that God may teach us to appreciate with all our hearts this banquet of holy poverty which He Himself has deigned to provide for us."

This story is told in the "Little Flowers of Saint Francis," and it continues to relate that having prayed and taken the

refection of bread and water, Saint Francis and his companion continued on their journey towards France.

"O God, Whose providence faileth not in its ordinance, we, Thy suppliants, beseech Thee that Thou wouldst remove from us all things harmful, and grant us all things that will help us." [1]

[1] Prayer in the Mass.

EIGHTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

THE GOLD OF INIQUITY.

"At that time, Jesus spoke to His disciples this parable; There was a certain rich man who had a steward; and the same was accused unto him that he had wasted his goods; and he called him, and said to him, How is it that I hear this of thee? Give an account of thy stewardship, for now thou canst be steward no longer. And the steward said within himself, What shall I do, because my lord taketh away from me the stewardship? To dig I am not able; to beg I am ashamed. I know what I will do, that when I shall be put out of the stewardship, they may receive me into their houses. Therefore calling together every one of his lord's debtors, he said to the first, How much dost thou owe my lord? But he said, A hundred barrels of oil. And he said to him, Take thy bill, and sit down quickly, and write fifty. Then he said to another, And how much dost thou owe? Who said, A hundred quarters of wheat. He said to him, Take thy bill and write eighty. And the lord commended the unjust steward, for as much as he had done wisely; for the children of this world are wiser in their generation than the children of light. And I say to you, Make unto you friends of the mammon of iniquity, that when you shall fail, they may receive you into everlasting dwellings." Luke xvi, 1-9.

IF we have unjustly accumulated money, we should know that God will soon demand an account of it. Our ill-gotten goods must be returned to the owners, or, if this be impossible, they must be distributed to the poor. The poor will then intercede for us with God and change His anger into mercy. "Give and you shall receive," exclaimed Saint John Chrysostom, "give to the poor, alms, and you shall receive from the Lord, grace." "The ransom of a man's

life are his riches," [1] says the inspired book of Proverbs, "and charity covereth all sins." [2]

The aged Tobias, thinking that his prayer was answered and that he was about to die, gave his son this admonition; "Alms deliver from all sin, and from death, and will not suffer the soul to go into darkness." [3] This does not mean that we may have our sins forgiven by bestowing alms, but it indicates that our benevolence will dispose the Lord to be merciful to us, and also that He will help us to have proper contrition for our faults. If we expect God to be merciful to us, we must be merciful to others.

Christ is very strong in His condemnation of covetousness, "for a man's life doth not consist in the abundance of things which he possesseth." [4] This truth is emphasized by a similitude in the Gospel of Saint Luke which Christ used to demonstrate the shortsightedness and the foolishness of those people whose exclusive concern in life is the acquisition of wealth. There was a certain rich man whose lands were very fertile and produced abundant harvests. In order to make room for his constantly increasing holdings, he was obliged to erect additional greater granaries and reinvest his treasure. As he continued to add to his already enormous possessions, he thus reflected, "Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years, take thy rest; eat, drink, and make good cheer." [5] "But God said to him, 'Thou fool, this night do they require thy soul of thee; and whose shall those things be which thou hast provided?' " [6]

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[1] Proverbs xiii, 8.
[2] Proverbs x, 12.
[3] Tobias iv, 11.
[4] Luke xii, 15.
[5] Luke xii, 19.
[6] Luke xii, 20.

Those who layeth up treasure in this world are not always rich in the sight of God. Wherefore did Christ say to His disciples, "Be not solicitous for your life, what you shall eat; nor for your body, what you shall put on."[1] "Sell what you possess and give alms. Make to yourselves bags which grow not old, a treasure in heaven which faileth not; where no thief approacheth, nor moth corrupteth."[2]

We are warned in this same chapter of the holy Gospel always to be prepared for the coming of the Lord; for to no one of us has the Lord revealed the awful hour of His approach.

There is yet time for us to transform the gold of iniquity which oppresses us into the gold of merit which means an abundance of graces. We should make it a practice to be generous to the poor. More especially is this advisable since we are only giving away that which we must inevitably and speedily relinquish. In exchange for our perishable alms, we shall receive an abundance of heavenly blessings. Thus we become poor in this world's goods to enrich ourselves with celestial treasures.

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In the fourth chapter of the Prophecy of Daniel, it is related that Nabuchodonosor, the king of Babylon, was happy and prosperous until he had a dream. This dream greatly disturbed him. He saw a vision of an immense tree with beautiful leaves and plenteous fruit. And an angel coming down from heaven cried out, "Cut down the tree, and chop off the branches thereof; shake off its leaves, and scatter its fruits."[3]

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[1]Luke xii, 22.
[2]Luke xii, 33.
[3]Daniel iv, 11.

The wise men of the king's court were unable to interpret the dream, and Nabuchodonosor sent for Daniel. The prophet gave this answer: "The tree which thou sawest which was high and strong, whose height reached to the skies, and the sight thereof into all the earth, and the branches thereof were most beautiful, and its fruit exceeding much,—it is thou, O king, who art grown great and become mighty; for thy greatness hath grown and hath reached to heaven, and thy power unto the ends of the earth."[1] The angel's instruction to cut down the tree and destroy it was then explained by Daniel to mean that the king was to be deprived of his kingdom because of his offences against God.

Then the prophet gave counsel to the king to redeem his sins with alms and his iniquities with works of mercy.

These words may refer also to us. It is possible that a sentence has already been passed on our sins. The axe may be even now at the roots of the trees of our lives. We should heed the advice of the prophet. We should make friends with the friends of Christ. If we have the poor to intercede for us on the last great day, there will be no doubt that we shall hear the angels bidding us welcome into dwellings of eternal peace.

"Graciously bestow on us, O Lord, we beseech Thee, the spirit to think and to do what is right, that we, who cannot exist without Thee, may have the strength to live always in conformity with Thee."[2]

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[1]Daniel iv, 17-19.

[2]Prayer in the Mass.

NINTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

AGAINST PROFANERS.

"At that time, when Jesus drew near to Jerusalem, seeing the city, He wept over it, saying, If thou also hadst known, and that in this thy day the things that are to thy peace; but now they are hidden from thy eyes. For the days shall come upon thee, and thy enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and straiten thee on every side, and beat thee flat to the ground, and thy children who are in thee; and they shall not leave in thee a stone upon a stone, because thou hast not known the time of thy visitation (by the Saviour). And entering into the temple, He began to cast out them that sold therein, and them that bought, saying to them, It is written, My house is the house of prayer, but you have made it a den of thieves. And He was teaching daily in the temple." Luke xix, 41-47.

IN the fourth year of the reign of King Solomon, he began to build a magnificent temple on Mount Moria in Jerusalem in honor of the Most High God. Seven years were required to finish this temple, despite the fact that an immense number of artisans were constantly engaged in building it. The inner walls were lined with planks which were cut from the cedars of Lebanon and various beautiful designs were carved upon them. All the furnishings of the sanctuary were of purest gold, and the walls and the floor of the Holy of Holies were covered with plates of the same precious metal.

At the dedication ceremonies, Solomon assembled all the ancients of Israel together with the princes of the various tribes, in order to carry the Ark of the Covenant in triumph into the temple. The people marched in procession before the Ark, and all of them were filled with an ecstasy of joy and religious fervor.

"And Solomon stood before the altar of the Lord in the sight of the assembly of Israel, and spread forth his hands towards heaven, and said, 'Lord God of Israel, there is no God like Thee in heaven above, or on earth beneath.'" [1] "Is it then to be thought that God should indeed dwell upon earth? For if heaven, and the heavens of heavens cannot contain Thee, how much less this house which I have built? But have regard to the prayer of Thy servant, and to his supplications, O Lord, my God,—and of Thy people," [2] that "whatsoever they shall pray for in this place," [3] Thou shalt "hear them in the place of Thy dwelling in heaven." [4]

When Solomon's prayer was ended, fire consumed the holocaust which had been prepared, and the Israelites fell prostrate on the ground and adored the great God of heaven, Who had wrought such wonders before them.

The Temple of Jerusalem was not, however, as holy as our churches, for in our tabernacles it is Christ Himself Who is always really and truly present. Every time that we enter the house of God, we should at once realize the holiness of the place which we are visiting. We should not be distracted nor conduct ourselves as if we were merely making our way into the dwelling of an ordinary friend. We should not permit our eyes to seek anything but the tabernacle, in which the Saviour of the world awaits our prayers of adoration and protestations of love.

If we indulge in any unnecessary conversation or in any actions that are in the slightest degree indecorous, we are guilty of the sin of irreverence. If we permit our eyes to wander, or our thoughts to dwell on subjects out of harmony

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[1] III Kings viii, 22, 23.
[2] III Kings viii, 27-30.
[3] III Kings viii, 30.
[4] III Kings viii, 30.

with the spirit of a place of worship, we are delinquent in our duty to show respect and to do honor to the great God Who dwelleth there.

Since the house of God is a house of prayer, it should not be a house of vanity or a house of sin. For of nothing is Christ more insistent than that due honor should be shown to the place where God tabernacles with men. For "the zeal of Thy house hath eaten Me up." [1]

Even though Christ was "meek and humble of heart," [2] He did not hesitate to "cast out all them that sold and bought in the temple." [3] He overthrew the tables of the money changers, and was emphatic in His denunciation of all profaners of sacred things.

Wherefore did the prophet Jeremias lament in the name of God against desecrators of holy places, "Because the children of Juda have done evil in My eyes"—and "have set their abominations in the house in which My name is called upon, —I will cause to cease out of the cities of Juda, and out of the streets of Jerusalem, the voice of joy, and the voice of gladness,—for the land shall be desolate." [4]

When the dedicatory ceremonies of the temple were finished, God appeared to Solomon and told him that He had heard his prayer and had sanctified the house which he had built, assuring Solomon that "My eyes and My heart shall be there always." [5] "I have heard thy prayer, and I have chosen this place to Myself for a house of sacrifice.—My eyes also shall be open, and my ears attentive to the prayer of him that shall pray in this place. For I have chosen, and have

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[1] John ii, 17.
[2] Matthew xi, 29.
[3] Matthew xxi, 12.
[4] Jeremias vii, 30-34.
[5] III Kings ix, 3.

sanctified this place, that My name may be there forever, and My eyes and My heart may remain there perpetually." [1] "But if you turn away, and forsake My justices, and My commandments which I have set before you, and shall go and serve strange gods, and adore them, I will pluck you up by the root out of My land which I have given you; and this house which I have sanctified to My name, I will cast away from before My face, and will make it a byword, and an example among all nations. And this house shall be for a proverb to all that pass by, and they shall be astonished and say, 'Why hath the Lord done thus to this land, and to this house?' And they shall answer, 'Because they forsook the Lord, the God of their fathers, Who brought them out of the land of Egypt, and laid hold on strange gods, and adored them, and worshipped them; therefore all these evils are come upon them.'" [2]

We should bury our faces in our hands and meditate on the gravity of irreverence in church. We should reflect on any tendencies which we may have had to be careless in this regard. We should repent sincerely for any past offences, and firmly determine never again to fail in showing proper respect in the house of God.

The Church today suggests this prayer to us: "In Thy mercy, O Lord, harken to the voice of Thy suppliants and grant them the things which they seek, and let them seek only for those things which are pleasing to Thee." [3]

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[1] II Paralipomenon vii, 12-16.
[2] II Paralipomenon vii, 19-22.
[3] Prayer in the Mass.

TENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

CONTRITION.

"At that time, Jesus spoke this parable to some who trusted in themselves as just, and despised others: Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. The Pharisee standing, prayed thus with himself: O God, I give Thee thanks that I am not as the rest of men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers; as also is this publican. I fast twice in the week; I give tithes of all that I possess. And the publican standing afar off, would not so much as lift up his eyes toward heaven, but struck his breast, saying, O God, be merciful to me a sinner. I say to you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other; because every one that exalteth himself shall be humbled, and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted." Luke xviii, 9-14.

THERE is no such thing as sincere repentance for sin without humility. Wherefore God sometimes sends humiliations to men in order to dispose them to amend their lives and to help them to have contrition for their sins. The lion, wounded by the spear, lowers his head, staggers onward a few paces, and then collapses. Thus it is also with the sinner. God humbles his pride by wounding him. At first, the sinner feels himself strong and secure in doing evil. He smilingly offends God, vaunting, almost, of the immunity from punishment which he appears to enjoy. He exults in his rebellious accomplishments and has no fear that his deeds may involve any unpleasant consequences. God may, however, touch his heart some day with sorrow. He may crush his pride with reverses. His haughtiness may be beaten into humility. God may permit him to be wounded in order that he may secure the blessing of a contrite heart.

If it has been our misfortune to have committed sin, it should be our immediate concern to repent. It is true that our sins have made us unworthy to enter into the house of God, but, nevertheless, God will be glad to receive us and to pardon us.

Every time that we are privileged to visit a church, and to kneel before the tabernacle where Jesus makes His home, we should bear in mind that we are not there to receive praise and rewards for the little good which we have done. We are there, rather, to implore forgiveness for the many sins of which we have been guilty. "Our iniquities are multiplied over our heads, and our sins are grown up even unto heaven." [1]

If we neglect to take into consideration our insignificance, if we make bold to imagine ourselves to be something which we are not, if we look down upon others who are actually better than we are, then we may expect to receive humiliations, because God resists the proud and He punishes the hypocrites and the Pharisees.

But if, instead of minimizing our faults and complacently condoning them, we are filled with remorse at their remembrance, then we may be sure that God will be good to us. If we realize the gravity of the offences which we as ordinary mortals have committed against the majesty of an infinite God, if we consider that God has always been to us a kind and loving Father, and that, despite our failings, He still wishes to love us as His children, if we fall to our knees and from the depths of our hearts ask God in all humility to forgive us, then we may have the utmost confidence that in His mercy God will hear and answer our prayer. We are unworthy of Thy friendship, O God, but in Thy great goodness deign to have pity on us! If we utter this plea to our heavenly Father,

[1] I Esdras ix, 6.

we may know with the utmost certainty that we shall receive a favorable answer. As the Psalmist sings: "A sacrifice to God is an afflicted spirit; a contrite and humbled heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise." [1]

In the Introit of the Mass for this Sunday, the priest utters these words in his own name and also in the name of the faithful: "Hear, O God, my prayer, and despise not my supplication; be attentive to me and hear me. When I cried to the Lord, He heard my voice." And in the Offertory, the priest reiterates this thought, - "To Thee, O Lord, have I lifted up my soul; in Thee, O my God, I put my trust. Let me not be ashamed; neither let my enemies ridicule me, for none of them that wait on Thee shall be confounded."

* * *

For twenty days the city of Bethulia had been beseiged by the Assyrians, and the commander of the attacking forces had cut off the water supply from the threatened city. The sufferings of the inhabitants were intense. The men and women were tortured by a burning thirst, and the ancients of the city finally decided that if no deliverance came within five more days they would surrender to the Assyrians. "For it is better that being captives we should live and bless the Lord, than that we should die,—after we have seen our wives and our infants die before our eyes." [2]

Now there was in the city a woman named Judith, of rare beauty and of great wealth, who spent her days in prayer and good works. When Judith heard that a time had been determined by the ancients within which the mercy of the Lord would have to be shown in order to save the city, Judith was displeased. She rebuked the ancients, saying that this method

[1] Psalm l, 19.
[2] Judith vii, 16.

of action was one which would enkindle the indignation of God rather than bespeak His mercy. "But forasmuch as the Lord is patient," she continued, "let us be penitent for this same thing, and with many tears let us beg His pardon." [1] "Let us humble our souls before Him, and continuing in an humble spirit, in His service, let us ask the Lord with tears that according to His will so He would show His mercy to us." [2]

God performed a miracle through the prayers of Judith and freed the people of Israel from the dreaded hosts of the Assyrians. God will also perform a miracle for us if we shall only ask Him in sincere and humble prayer. It is a greater miracle to soften a heart that has been hardened by pride than it is to create. For when something is made from nothing, "nothing" does not resist the work of God, but the proud heart of the sinner oftentimes, unfortunately, effectually resisteth grace.

"O God, Who dost chiefly manifest Thy power in forbearance and mercy, look down upon us with pity, that, hastening on to receive Thy promised gifts, we may soon be made partakers of the blessings of heaven." [3]

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[1] Judith viii, 14.
[2] Judith viii, 16, 17.
[3] Prayer in the Mass.

FEAST OF THE ASSUMPTION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY.

"At that time, Jesus entered into a certain town; and a certain woman, named Martha, received Him into her house; and she had a sister called Mary, who sitting also at the Lord's feet, heard His word. But Martha was busy about much serving; who stood and said, Lord, hast Thou no care that my sister hath left me alone to serve? Speak to her, therefore, that she help me. And the Lord answering, said to her, Martha, Martha, thou art careful, and art troubled about many things; but one thing is necessary. Mary hath chosen the best part which shall not be taken away from her." Luke x, 38-42.

TODAY'S Gospel paints the picture of the scene in Bethany when Mary, the sister of Martha, sat at the feet of Jesus and listened to the words which fell from His sacred lips. Mary was entirely unmindful of the fact that she was in need of repose and refreshment. Her one thought was of Jesus, the treasure of her soul, the light of her life, and her guide to the kingdom of God.

The Church applies the words of praise which Christ spoke of Mary on this occasion to the Blessed Virgin, - "Mary hath chosen for herself the better part which shall not be taken from her forever." [1]

From the day of the Annunciation, when Mary accepted the sublime honor of becoming God's Mother, until the day of her death, all her thoughts and all her heartbeats were for her divine Son. Her soul was aflame with the fire of love, which burned with an all-consuming intensity. There was nothing left for the world to claim by death, and at the end of her life

[1]Communion of the Mass, Feast of the Assumption.

she was at once assumed into heaven and consecrated forever in glory.

Our Blessed Lady was never obliged to struggle against the stormy surges of passion and of sin. Never, for even a single instant, did the shadow of a cloud bedim her radiant beauty. God protected her from the taint of every imperfection. He strengthened her with the fullness of every grace, and adorned her with every virtue.

The words of Ecclesiasticus apply to Mary with supreme appropriateness, - "I was exalted like a cedar in Libanus, and as a cypress tree on Mount Sion. I was exalted like a palm tree in Cades, and as a rose plant in Jericho. As a fair olive tree in the plains, and as a plane tree by the water in the streets, was I exalted.—As the vine I have brought forth a pleasant odor: and my flowers are the fruit of honor and riches. I am the mother of fair love, and of fear and of knowledge, and of holy hope. In me is all grace of the way and of the truth, in me is all hope of life and of virtue. Come over to me all ye that desire me, and be filled with my fruits. For my spirit is sweet above honey, and my inheritance above honey and the honeycomb. My memory is unto everlasting generations. They that harkeneth to me shall not be confounded and they that work by me shall not sin. They that explain me shall have life everlasing." [1]

* * *

The Judges preceded the Kings as the leaders of Israel. During their time, the chosen people were in the power of a tyrannical oppressor, the king of Chanaan. "And there was at that time Debbora, a prophetess, who judged the people; and she sat under a palm tree, which was called by her name, between Rama and Bethel in Mount Ephraim; and the children

[1] Ecclesiasticus xxiv, 17-31.

of Israel came up to her for all judgment. And she sent and called Barac and said to him, 'The Lord God of Israel hath commanded thee: Go and lead an army to Mount Thabor, and thou shalt take with thee ten thousand fighting men.'—And Barac said to her, 'If thou wilt come with me, I will go; if thou wilt not come with me, I will not go.' Debbora therefore arose and went with Barac—and all the multitude of the enemies was utterly destroyed." [1]

The hymn of victory was then intoned: "O you of Israel, that have willingly offered your lives to danger, bless the Lord. —The earth trembled and the heavens dropped water. The mountains melted before the face of the Lord.—The valiant men ceased, and rested in Israel, until Debbora arose, a mother arose in Israel. The Lord chose new wars, and He Himself overthrew the gates of the enemies. Arise, arise, O Debbora, arise, arise, and utter a canticle. The remnants of the people are saved, the Lord hath fought among the valiant ones." [2]

We also are surrounded by formidable enemies, and it is most important that we conquer them. The conflict is uneven, but we have Mary, our Mother, to assist us. She makes use of neither shield nor spear, but her prayers in our behalf are of far greater protection to us than armies arrayed in battle. She is enthroned on high as a queen, seated at the right hand of her Son. All generations are present before her and salute her as "Blessed." Without her, every hope ends in despair; with her, every desire ends in possession.

"Pardon, we beseech Thee, O Lord, the sins of Thy servants, that we, who are unable to please Thee by our own actions, may be saved by the intercession of the mother of Thy Son." [3]

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[1] Judges iv, 4-16.

[2] Judges v, 2-13.

[3] Prayer in the Mass, Feast of the Assumption.

ELEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

DEAFNESS AND DUMBNESS.

"At that time, Jesus going out to the coasts of Tyre, came by Sidon to the sea of Galilee, through the midst of the coasts of Decapolis. And they bring to Him one deaf and dumb, and they besought Him that He would lay His hand upon him. And taking him from the multitude apart, He put His fingers into his ears, and spitting, He touched his tongue; and looking up to heaven, he groaned and said to him, Ephpheta, that is, Be thou opened: and immediately his ears were opened, and the string of his tongue was loosed, and he spoke right. And He charged them that they should tell no man; but the more He charged them, so much the more a great deal did they publish it; and so much the more did they wonder, saying, He hath done all things well; He hath made both the deaf to hear, and the dumb to speak." Mark vii, 31-37.

THE habitual sinner gradually becomes deaf to the voice of God. This voice, which is direct but at the same time gentle, penetrates into the soul of the sinner in the beginning of his perversion, and occasionally moves him to have remorse for his evil deeds. Sometimes God uses the prayers of a loving mother, the pleas of a heartbroken wife, or the advice of a good friend as the medium to carry His own voice. If, however, the sinner continues to offend God, his deafness markedly increases, his remorse grows duller and duller, and the sinful habits of long years finally succeed in establishing their roots deep in his soul.

Sin eventually becomes a routine occurrence. No longer does the sinner exert the will power which is an essential complement to grace if a man is to save his soul. On the few occasions that the voice of God penetrates his deafness,

he pays no attention but deludes himself with fallacious excuses. "I am not bad," he reflects, "I do not rob, I do not curse, I do not kill. My little indulgences are due to the weakness of human nature. I am really not malicious."

Holy Scripture gives this man his answer: "Whosoever shall keep the whole law, but offend in one point, is become guilty of all."[1] A man is a fool to think that he can sin with impunity in one respect just because he does not sin in others. He dies before God just as truly for grievous offences against one commandment as he would die for grievous offences against another. Of what advantage is it to have the keel of a ship tight and sound, if she has a gaping hole in her side? Water will pour in through one opening just as surely as it will through another. The logic of these considerations has little effect, however, on the hardened sinner. He grows old in sin and becomes sordid with iniquity.

The habitual sinner is not only deaf; he is also dumb. If he would only harken and make an effort to regard the voices which succeed in piercing his deafness, he would realize that his only hope for deliverance consists in prayer. If he would make up his mind to enter a church and throw himself at the feet of his Master, his soul would be freed from its shackles. If he would implore forgiveness and help, Christ would certainly answer his prayer. Instead, however, he prefers to persist in his indifference. He decides to continue in sin.

This is the chief significance of the fact narrated in today's Gospel, that when Jesus met the man who was deaf and dumb, He uttered a groan. For it is evident that a person afflicted with spiritual deafness and dumbness has surely great need for commiseration.

* * *

[1] St. James ii, 10.

The first book of Kings describes the dedication of Samuel to the service of God. It came to pass that one night when Heli, the high priest, slept on a couch near the tabernacle and Samuel was sleeping in a room near him, "The Lord called Samuel." [1] And Samuel ran to Heli and said, "Here am I, for thou didst call me." [2] Heli answered, "I did not call; go back and sleep." [3] And the boy, obedient, returned to his cell and slept. Again Samuel heard the voice, and once more he went to Heli, and Heli answered a second time, "I did not call thee, my son; return and sleep." [4]

Still another time was the summons repeated, and "then Heli understood that the Lord called the child, and he said to Samuel, 'Go, and sleep, and if He shall call thee any more, thou shalt say: Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth.' " [5] And so when Samuel heard the voice of the Lord again, he repeated the words which Heli had told him to say. The Lord then revealed to Samuel that evil was to fall on the house of Heli because of the wickedness of his sons. Thus did Samuel become a friend of God because of his prompt obedience, "and the Lord was with him." [6]

We Christians should likewise arouse ourselves from sleep. We should be no longer deaf to the word of God or dumb in invoking God's aid. If we repeat with a sincerely contrite heart the prayer of the youthful Samuel, "Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth," [7] we may be sure that God will make us pure in heart and soul and that He will bestow on us an abundance of graces.

1I Kings iii, 4.
2I Kings iii, 5.
3I Kings iii, 5.
4I Kings iii, 6.
5I Kings iii, 9.
6I Kings iii, 19.
7I Kings iii, 10.

In asking the mercy of Almighty God, we may make use of the prayer which is said in the Mass for this Sunday: "Almighty, eternal God, Who, in the abundance of Thy loving kindness, doth exceed the deserts and the desires of Thy suppliants, pour forth Thy mercy upon us, to take away from us those things which our consciences fear, and grant those things which, in our lowliness, we do not presume to ask."

TWELFTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

REVENGE AND PARDON.

"At that time, Jesus said to His disciples, Blessed are the eyes that see the things which you see. For I say to you, that many prophets and kings have desired to see the things that you see, and have not seen them; and to hear the things that you hear, and have not heard them. And behold a certain lawyer stood up, tempting Him, and saying, Master, what must I do to possess eternal life? But He said to him, What is written in the law? How readest thou? He answering, said, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbor as thyself. And He said to him, Thou hast answered rightly: this do, and thou shalt live. But he, willing to justify himself (for asking the question) said to Jesus, And who is my neighbor? And Jesus answering, said, A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among robbers, who also stripped him, and having wounded him, went away, leaving him half dead: and it chanced that a certain (Jewish) priest went down the same way, and seeing him, passed by. In like manner also a Levite (minister in the temple), when he was near the place and saw him, passed by. But a certain Samaritan being on his journey, came near him, and seeing him, was moved with compassion; and going up to him, bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine; and, setting him upon his own beast, brought him to an inn, and took care of him: and the next day he took out two pence, and gave to the host, and said, Take care of him, and whatsoever thou shalt spend over and above, I, at my return, will repay thee. Which of these three in thy opinion, was neighbor to him that fell among robbers? But he said, He that showed mercy to him. And Jesus said to him, Go, and do thou in like manner." Luke x, 23-37.

"AN eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth."[1] Thus was it written in the Old Law, when the blood of men was hot, when men were quick to take offence, and just as quick to seek revenge. In the New Testament, Jesus has written two words which occur throughout

[1] Matthew v, 38.

the Gospels with great frequency. These words are, "love" and "pardon." "Love your enemies: do good to them that hate you; and pray for them that persecute and calumniate you." [1]

Not only does God command us not to hate our brethren; He commands us also to love them. We are obliged to return good for evil, and we are bound to reciprocate hate with love.

The words of the Gospel read in the Mass for this Sunday vibrate with this message which must ever remain sublime. Down through all the centuries of the Church's eternal life, this parable must excite the admiration even of those who do not choose to learn the lesson which it teaches.

A poor Jew went down from Jerusalem to Jericho. Wounded by robbers, and suffering, he was lying helpless by the roadside. Two of his countrymen passed by and scarcely deigned to glance at the wretched figure. Finally a certain Samaritan, an enemy of the Jewish people, "came near him; and seeing him, was moved with compassion." [2] The Samaritan dismounted and knelt by the side of the injured man. His purpose was not to take advantage of his enemy's misfortune, not to taunt him and to make his agony more bitter, but, rather, to assist him, to cleanse his wounds and to bind them up, and to treat him kindly. His object was to save his life if it was possible. This enemy of the Jew, so much feared and hated, whom he had cursed so many times and so acrimoniously, proved in a time of need to be more than a brother to him.

Praise be to Thee, O Jesus Christ, that in the midst of a world overrun by human savagery, Thou continuest to announce Thy gentle doctrine of peace and of meekness, and Thy divine message of charity and of forgiveness!

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[1] Matthew v, 44.

[2] Luke x, 33.

The true Christian cannot be the enemy of his enemy. "He cannot be," as Tertullian said, "the enemy of anyone." He must love those who love him, and he must also love those who hate him. Therein is made manifest his virtue. In this his heroism consists. For there is certainly no merit in loving those who have regard for us. Even the pagans do this.

Christians do not love their neighbors because of their desire to reciprocate affection. Neither do they love them because of sympathy, or because of appreciation of their talents or on account of self-interest. Christians love their neighbors because they love God.

Wherefore, even if we have been used unjustly, we are still obliged to say kind words of those who have harmed us. If our enemies strike us and oppress us, our thoughts will be not of the malice which they displayed by illtreating us, but, rather, of the justice of God, Who permits these injuries to try us.

These thoughts enable us to face with tranquillity every situation which arises. God permits all the afflictions which we suffer. He makes use of all the petty persecutions of those who dislike us, just the same as He makes use of personal misfortunes, of sickness and of death, in order that we may have opportunities to atone for our sins and helps to become more detached from the things of the world.

* * *

Job had great possessions and lived in abundance and ease. He was a faithful servant of God, and Satan insinuated that his holiness was due to self-interest because of his temporal prosperity. God permitted every sort of an evil to afflict him, thus providing all mankind with a perfect model of patience. His seven sons and three daughters were killed; his fields were devastated by fire; ravaging bands of Sabeans stole his oxen. Job, however, uttered not a single word of complaint. "The

Lord gave me all these things," he said, "and the Lord hath taken them away." "Blessed be the name of the Lord."[1] "God has taken those things away," said Job, "it was not the Sabeans."

As the hour of His agony approached, Christ placed the seal of His divine approval on this sentiment. He gave us a sublime example of the attitude which we should have towards trouble: "The chalice which My Father hath given Me to drink, shall I not drink it?"[2]

Should we, therefore, be concerned that certain individuals are apparently treating us improperly? Should we not, rather, bear in mind that it is God Who is trying us? We must accept our trials patiently. We must bless the hand that strikes us. No one can do us real harm. We are on our journey to heaven and God is accompanying us.

"Omnipotent and merciful Saviour, Whose gift it is that Thy faithful children shall serve Thee worthily and rightly, grant us, we beseech Thee, that we may ever and always hasten on to the fulfillment of Thy promises."[3]

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[1]Job 1, 21.
[2]John xviii, 11.
[3]Prayer in the Mass.

THIRTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

CONFESSION.

"At that time, as Jesus was going to Jerusalem, He passed through the midst of Samaria and Galilee: and as He entered into a certain town, there met Him ten men that were lepers, who stood afar off, and lifted up their voice, saying, Jesus, Master, have mercy on us. Whom when He saw, He said, Go show yourselves to the priests. And it came to pass, as they went, they were made clean. And one of them, when he saw that he was made clean, went back, with a loud voice, glorifying God: and he fell on his face before His feet, giving thanks: and this was a Samaritan. And Jesus answering, said, Were not ten made clean? And where are the nine? There is no one found to return and give glory to God, but this stranger. And He said to him, Arise, go thy way; for thy faith hath made thee whole." Luke xvii, 11-19.

BY a single word, or by a simple act of His will, Christ is able to cleanse a soul defiled from sin just as He cleansed the bodies of the ten lepers from the loathsome disease with which they were afflicted. Nevertheless, Christ does not wish to justify sinners in this way. It is Christ's will that the power of forgiving sins should be exercised in His name by those whom He has ordained for this purpose.

Christ has entrusted His priests with powers enabling them to cure all the ills of the soul. Down through the ages of the Church, sinful humanity has stretched out suppliant arms to the Lord, begging Him to cure the frightful leprosy of sin. "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us." [1] And echoing

[1] Luke xvii, 13.

down through the "arches of the years" has come the Master's answer to this plea: "Go, show yourselves to the priests." [1]

Our offences have been sins of pride, sins of defiance of God. To have them forgiven, we must humble ourselves before God's minister. We had the boldness to be proud; now we must have the courage to be humble. We must explain all the wounds in our soul, even those which are most shameful. It is true that the priest who hears our confession is obliged to receive us kindly, listen to us sympathetically, direct us prudently and encourage us to a better life in the manner which seems to him most appropriate.

If it were actually permitted to confess our sins direct to Christ, there is little doubt that some of us, overwhelmed by the gravity of our sins and the goodness of Christ, would still prefer to avail ourselves of the intercessory influence of our confessors. Even in the course of ordinary affairs, we like to have some intermediary to assist in reconciling us with other men whom we may possibly have offended, or to intercede for us with those from whom we seek consideration.

Christ has clearly indicated the means which we as sinners must use in order to secure reconciliation with God. "Go, show yourselves to the priests." [2] The minister before whom we must present ourselves is our brother. He is like us also a traveler through this vale of tears. He is weak with the same human frailties to which all mankind is heir. He knows our difficulties. He appreciates the character of our temptations. He realizes the severity of the tempests which sometimes whirl about our souls. He understands the tendencies which we occasionally have to be downcast and discouraged. Even an angel from Paradise would not have the same ability to guide us and help us in our troubles as has

[1] Luke xvii, 14.
[2] Luke xvii, 14.

this angel of earth,—the priest. One angel comes from the home of light and of happiness; the other,—and the one who understands us best,—lives in this country of grief and of suffering. When we sob out our sins to the priest, we feel not confusion but comfort. When we show him the deep, deadly wounds in our soul, we experience not aggravation but easement.

* * *

There is an interesting story which appears in the works of Father Paul Segneri, a great preacher of the seventeenth century. The story concerns a merchant who lived in Salamanca in Spain. This man was unfortunate, and his misfortune finally caused him to be disheartened and to despair. He became angry against God and reviled Him, striving with diabolical hatred to outrage Him in every conceivable way. He even wanted the sins which he committed to be worse than the sins committed by any other mortal. Finally, he went to confession in order to affront his divine Enemy with the extreme insult of sacrilege. He was, however, so very bitter that he could not conceal from the confessor the whirlpool of hate which seethed in his soul. When the priest spoke to him of the goodness of God and of His mercy, the reprobate asked, ironically, "Do you think that one confession would be sufficient to blot out every sin on my soul?" "Yes," replied the minister of God with great fervor, "if you had the most grievous sins of anyone in Salamanca, or even in the whole world, and you would be truly sorry for them and would wish to be reconciled with God, He would be willing to forgive you and I could absolve you at this moment." A miracle of grace occurred. The despairing sinner felt remorse. He became repentant. He confessed his sins and was truly sorry. He was converted to a Christian life. He was himself the first to tell

this story of God's mercy. He afterwards entered a monastery and died a saint.

This is the prayer of the Church in the Mass for today in behalf of her children: "Almighty and eternal God, grant us an increase of faith, hope and charity, and in order that we may deserve to attain what Thou hast promised, make us love and obey Thy commands."

FOURTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

AVARICE.

"At that time, Jesus said to His disciples: No man can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one, and love the other, or he will sustain the one, and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon. Therefore I say to you, be not solicitous for your life, what you shall eat, nor for your body, what you shall put on. Is not the life more than the meat, and the body more than the raiment? Behold the birds of the air, for they neither sow, nor do they reap, nor gather into barns: and your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are not you of much more value than they? And which of you by taking thought can add to his stature one cubit? And for raiment why are you solicitous? Consider the lilies of the field how they grow: they labor not, neither do they spin. But I say to you, that not even Solomon in all his glory was arrayed as one of these. Now if God so clothe the grass of the field which is today, and tomorrow is cast into the oven, how much more you, O ye of little faith? Be not solicitous, therefore, saying: What shall we eat, or what shall we drink, or wherewith shall we be clothed? For after all these things do the heathens seek. For your Father knoweth that you have need of all these things. Seek ye therefore first the kingdom of God and His justice: and all these things shall be added unto you." Matthew vi, 24-33.

THE prophet Jeremias has said that Avarice keeps a great school and all men, the lowliest as well as the highest, are pupils of this corrupting teacher. "From the least of them even to the greatest, all are given to covetousness."[1] Avaricious is the rich man who hoards in his coffers his accumulated savings; avaricious also is the poor

[1] Jeremias vi, 13.

man who dreams of riches as the one supreme good. Both of them devote all the forces of their minds and of their bodies to the idolatrous worship of money.

As a result of a burning desire to serve this false god, the whole world is entangled in an inextricable skein of misrepresentations, fraudulent practices, and cunning, deceitful plots. Frequently, the prosecution of these plans entails the perpetration of deeds of violence. The strong oppress the weak and grind them. The weak rob the strong. Vicious, well-organized minorities attack and overcome unprepared and leaderless majorities. All admit that it is wrong to steal, but at the same time many are on the alert to acquire things to which they have no right.

This insatiable covetousness is, as Holy Scripture says, "the root of all evils," [1] Therefore, between the love of God and the love of money there is an antagonism which it is nowise possible to adjust. The two loves are absolutely incompatible. "You cannot serve God and mammon." [2] We must decide between one or the other.

The avaricious man is never contented. "He will not be satisfied until he consume his own soul." [3] But the man who loves God and who serves Him will receive "a crown of justice, which the Lord, the just Judge," [4] will render him on the last day.

We should not be too much concerned with the things of this world. We need not be anxious about the morrow. "Give us this day our daily bread," [5] is the prayer which the Master taught us. We should leave tomorrow in the hands

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[1] I Timothy vi, 10.
[2] Luke xvi, 13.
[3] Ecclesiasticus xiv, 9.
[4] II Timothy iv, 8.
[5] Luke xi, 3.

of God, in the hands of Him Who moves the planets of the universe without trouble or fatigue, Who causes crystal springs to gush from the rocks to give us drink, and Who ripens the crops in the fields to furnish us with food. If we think of God, God will surely think of us.

The father of Saint Charles Borromeo was wealthy, but he was so lavish in distributing alms to the poor that one of his friends admonished him, telling him to be more careful lest he impoverish his family. "I will care for the children of God," was the answer, "and God will take care of my children."

A man who has no other hope than that which is afforded him by his material possessions is actually poor. A man whose exclusive thoughts and hopes are centered in God is infinitely rich.

* * *

One evening while Jesus was conversing with His disciples, a young man approached and kneeling in the presence of the Master, asked, "What good shall I do that I may have life everlasting?" [1] Jesus looked at him and loved him. He answered him, saying, "If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments." [2] And with evident sincerity the young man replied, "All these have I kept from my youth, what is yet wanting to me?" [3] "Jesus saith to him, 'If thou wilt be perfect, go sell what thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me.'" [4]

Could there be a vocation more certain than the one which was given to this young man? Could there be a more gentle call to the service of God? The youth did not, however,

[1] Matthew xix, 16.
[2] Matthew xix, 17.
[3] Matthew xix, 20.
[4] Matthew xix, 21.

heed the invitation. "He had great possessions,"[1] and he did not care to give them up.

If he had responded to the Master's divine summons, if he had left all to follow Christ, he would have acquired true riches, and today would have been venerated on our altars as an apostle and as a saint.

"Guard Thy Church, we beseech Thee, O Lord, with Thy continual kindness; and because without Thy help, human frailty succumbs, we beg Thee to keep us from those things which injure us and to bestow on us the helps which will save us."[2]

[1]Matthew xix, 22.

[2]Prayer in the Mass.

FIFTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

MOTHERHOOD.

"At that time, Jesus went into a city called Naim, and there went with Him His disciples, and a great multitude. And when He came nigh to the city, behold a dead man was carried out, the only son of his mother; and she was a widow, and much people of the city were with her. And when the Lord saw her, He had compassion on her, and said to her, Weep not. And He came near, and touched the bier. And they that carried it stood still. And He said, Young man, I say to thee, Arise: and he that was dead sat up, and began to speak. And He delivered him to his mother. And there came a fear on them all; and they glorified God, saying, A great prophet is risen up amongst us and God hath visited His people." Luke vii, 11-16.

THIS beautiful Gospel story tells us of the deep affection which Jesus has for those whom God has chosen for the sublime vocation of motherhood. The grief of this poor, desolate, widowed mother moved Jesus to perform a miracle in order to restore the son to those empty arms, thus affording a most eloquent demonstration of His love for those to whom He has entrusted the care of families.

The love of a mother for her child can neither be measured nor can it be adequately described. It is a pure, all-consuming flame ignited by God Himself, inextinguishable in this life, and unquenchable even in the life to come unless the son has died in mortal sin. Mother love is that tender, self-sacrificing devotion which fortifies a woman with superhuman resistance, enabling her to pass watchful days and sleepless nights by the bedside of her sick child, measuring his every breath, counting his every heartbeat, interpreting his

every sigh. It makes her forget herself and think only of her child, and even makes her rejoice in wearing herself out to give him comfort. No other natural feeling resembles this attachment, and the reason is because this heroic immolation is divine.

God is not content, however, with a mother's solicitude for her child's material life. With the same, and even more attentions, she must protect his soul. She must bend the tender sapling now, for tomorrow may be too late. Mothers have the greatest responsibility in regard to the future life of their children, and even from their infancy they must instruct them in virtue if they hope to have them develop into manhood as worthy sons of the Church and worthy citizens of the Country.

Such are the duties of a mother, and such the picture of the ideal mother.

God has instituted matrimony that children may be born into the world, and woe to those who willingly frustrate this purpose. The fathers of the Church scathingly denounced the pagan woman who sinfully avoided the obligations of motherhood. "If the chief end of marriage is to beget children," they said, "and you do not wish them, wherefore did you marry? If your own mother had been actuated by such base principles, where would you yourself now be?" And Tertullian, the great Carthaginian defender of the Church in the early centuries, calls this terrible crime "anticipated murder," because he does not see a difference between the killing of a creature which has been born and the denial of the right to live to one who should be born.

God has also established the indissolubility of marriage so that children may have constant, loving care and affectionate guidance in the formation of their characters. Parents must, therefore, be especially vigilant about the education of

their children. "Some there are," cried Saint John Chrysostom, "who have greater watchfulness over horses and cattle than they have over their own children." They guard their live stock from every danger, but they do not keep their children from bad books and bad companions. Sometimes, unfortunately, children learn their first bad words, their first curses and, perhaps, even their first blasphemies, from the lips of those whom God has charged to give them good example. Little by little, vices make insidious inroads in their youthful hearts, and the contamination finally permeates every fibre of their being, even to the very marrow of their bones.

For all the bad that your children have heard from you, and for all the good and necessary things which they have not heard, you, parents, must render an account to God in the fleeting space of a few short years.

* * *

The mother of Saint Clement of Ancira, earnestly desired that her son would emulate the example of those heroes who had given their lives for Christ. From his earliest years, she told him of the struggles and the victories of the great champions of the faith, and in later life this boy became himself one of the Church's most glorious martyrs.

The one prayer of the mother of Saint Louis, King of France, was that her son would never commit a mortal sin. Wherefore, every evening as she blessed him and bade him goodnight she repeated these words, "My son, I would much prefer to see you dead than to have you fall into sin;" and notwithstanding the dangers of the court and the cares of the kingdom, her son persevered in sanctity and is today venerated on our altars as a saint.

God heard the prayer of the mothers of Saint Clement and of Saint Louis, and He will likewise hear the prayers of

other mothers. Good Christian mothers, who are touched with tender pity at the picture of the Divine Master consoling the widow of Naim, be faithful to your vocation and have confidence in God. Jesus will also help you.

Thinking of our mothers, who occupy such high places of honor in the Church, we may repeat the gentle prayer which is recited in the Mass of this Sunday: "Continue, O merciful Saviour, to watch over Thy Church, protecting her, purifying her, and strengthening her, and since without her we cannot be safely established in glory, let us be guided always by her maternal directions."

SIXTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

VANITY.

"At that time, when Jesus went into the house of one of the chief of the Pharisees on the Sabbath-day to eat bread, they watched Him. And behold, there was a certain man before Him that had the dropsy: and Jesus answering, spoke to the lawyers and Pharisees, saying, Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath-day? But they held their peace. But He taking him, healed him, and sent him away. And answering them, He said, Which of you shall have an ass or an ox fall into a pit, and will not immediately draw him out, on the Sabbath-day? And they could not answer Him these things. And He spoke a parable also to them that were invited, marking how they chose the first seats at the table, saying to them, When thou art invited to a wedding, sit not down in the first place, lest perhaps one more honorable than thou be invited by him; and he that invited thee and him, come and say to thee, Give this man place; and then thou begin with shame to take the lowest place. But when thou art invited, go, sit down in the lowest place: that when he who inviteth thee cometh, he may say to thee, Friend, go up higher: then shalt thou have glory before them that sit at table with thee: because every one that exalteth himself shall be humbled, and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted." Luke xiv, 1-11.

THE words which Christ addressed to the banqueters in the house of the Pharisees, and the miracle which He performed in healing the man who was sick, were intended by Christ to teach us the lesson of humility. Both the words of Christ and the miracle are calculated to serve as remedies to cure us of the sins of vanity. The few little talents that we possess and which our imaginations magnify to such a degree that we consider them extraordinary, and

the many additional qualities which we do not have but which our pride deludes us into thinking that we possess, have a tendency, sometimes, to puff us up with conceit. Such an attitude, apart from its sinfulness, indicates a decidedly warped condition of mind. If we wish to overcome this inclination, we must first be sincere with ourselves. We must appreciate our real insignificance.

Our pride makes us ridiculous in the eyes of our fellow men. It also makes us truly lamentable figures in the sight of God. We place our glorious selves uppermost in our thoughts. We imagine that other people must have the same high opinions of our prerogatives that we ourselves fondly cherish. If we chance to have a little knowledge of a few subjects, we assume the attitude of being wise and educated men. We pretend in our conversations that we are deep students, little realizing that our very words betray the shallow character of our learning. If we have a little money, we are anxious to have our associates consider that we are more comfortably situated than our actual circumstances warrant. If we do not chance to be deformed, we consider that we are really prepossessing and we seriously accept and cordially reciprocate the meaningless compliments with which men sometimes flatter one another.

Even though we are vain ourselves, we are still able to note the weaknesses and the foolish actions of others who are vain. At the same time, we remain utterly blind to similar stupidities in our own conduct. This absurd estimate of our own importance has absolutely no justification. It is founded on a myth; it is based on nothing. For this reason, it is called "vanity," which literally means "empty."

Our possessions and our personal attributes are nothing to God. It is possible for us really to gain more by losing them than by retaining them. Saint Francis of Assisi was

never so rich as he was when he despoiled himself of his holdings. Saint Clare was never so beautiful as she was when she clothed herself in sackcloth for love of her Spouse, Jesus Christ.

All of our true greatness resides in the soul. It consists in good intentions and meritorious works. But even these are gifts of God which precede our desires and assist us to put them into effect. Wherefore there is nothing, absolutely nothing, about which we can be vain. The most and the best that we can do, and all that God wishes us to do,is to stretch out our hands in prayer and beg Him for mercy.

* * *

The Church observes the feast of Saint Michael the Archangel during this period of the year. She recalls to our attention the fact that a host of angels became arrogant and proud and dared to oppose God Almighty Himself. These angels refused to recognize any longer that God was the eternal and incomparable source of their greatness. The archangel Michael, by the direction of God, overpowered these bad angels and cast them from heaven into hell, which from that moment was created to be their everlasting dwelling place.

Let us humble ourselves before God, our Creator. Let us recognize clearly and at all times, and freely acknowledge, that the gifts which we have received come to us entirely unmerited from His bountiful hands. Let us implore Him to give us His treasures, not those which will enrich us with the goods of the world, but, rather, those which will prepare us for our nuptials in heaven.

"Let Thy assistance, we beseech Thee, O Lord, continually go before us and accompany us, and make us ever zealous in the performance of good works." [1]

[1] Prayer in the Mass.

SEVENTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

GOD.

"At that time, the Pharisees came nigh to Jesus. And one of them, a doctor of the law, asked Him, tempting Him: Master, which is the great commandment in the law? Jesus said to him: Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul, and with thy whole mind. This is the greatest and the first commandment. And the second is like to this: Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments dependeth the whole law and the prophets. And the Pharisees being gathered together, Jesus asked them, saying: What think you of Christ? Whose Son is He? They say to Him: David's. He saith to them: How then doth David in spirit call Him Lord, saying: The Lord said to my Lord: Sit on My right hand, until I make Thy enemies Thy footstool? If David then call Him Lord, how is He his Son? And no man was able to answer Him a word: neither durst any man from that day forth ask Him any more questions." Mark xxii, 35-46.

THE vigorous response which Jesus gave to the Pharisee who asked Him which was the most important commandment may be summarized in these words: Know God and love Him. Even the pagans, contemplating the order which existed in the world and reflecting on the immensity of the universe, recognized the necessity of the existence of a First Cause, Whom they adored as God. The Jewish people, when they received the tables of the Law to the accompaniment of lightning and of thunder, prostrated themselves in terror, for they saw in this prodigy a manifestation of the majesty of the eternal God. The Christians, who know God from the miracles of goodness which He has performed,

realize that God wishes to receive from them a frank acknowledgment of their dependence on Him as their Creator, and that He wishes also to implant in their hearts a warm, strong feeling of affection for Him as their Ultimate End.

The Son of God came down from heaven to this earth in order to redeem the human race. The Christian who does not appreciate the significance of the fact that Christ is his Redeemer does not deserve to be known by the name of Christian. The true child of the Church always keeps before his mind's eye the fact that Christ is his Saviour. He strives to mirror in his own life the wonderful picture of his divine Model. He exemplifies in the most perfect manner possible the sublime teachings of his Master. He knows the chief mysteries of his holy religion, and this, not only for the purpose of being able to give reasons for the faith that is in him, but also that he may better love and better serve his Maker and his Redeemer.

There is no love holier or stronger than the love which Christ has for a soul. "As the Father hath loved Me, I also have loved you. Abide in My love." [1] "Behold what manner of charity the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called and should be the sons of God." [2]

And yet on every side we see evidences of impiety. Improper literature abounds. Superstitious cults and practices flourish in many places. Men and women, not content to lead bad lives themselves, not satisfied with the destruction of religion in their own souls, seem diabolically animated with the desire to destroy the souls of others.

Christians must be on their guard. They must study always to know better the adorable person of Christ and the

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[1] John xv, 9.

[2] I St. John iii, 1.

truths which He came to reveal. Knowing Christ more intimately, they will, as a consequence, love Him more fervently and maintain always inviolate their covenant to be loyal and devoted disciples.

* * *

In the second book of Machabees, the atrocities which the pagans committed on the Jews in order to oblige them to practise idolatrous superstitions are described in gruesome detail.

Eleazar, one of the first doctors of the law, "a man advanced in years and of comely countenance," [1] was commanded to eat the flesh of swine, which was contrary to the provisions of the Law. "But he, choosing rather a most glorious death than a hateful life," [2] declared that he would undergo any torment that might be inflicted on him rather than stain his soul with sin by a violation of the commandment of God. Some of those who were standing by, pitying the old man, advised him to eat other meat which was not forbidden, so as to feign compliance with the order of the cruel king. Eleazar promptly rejected this subterfuge as entirely unworthy of a man who had lived in strict compliance with the laws of God all the years of his life. " 'It doth not become our age,' said he, 'to dissemble.' " [3] He then explained to these false friends that even if such a device as they suggested were right, such a concession would involve bad consequences, for the young men of his nation would be scandalized by his apparent defection. They would be deceived and be tempted to follow his example, and thereby he would bring a stain and curse upon his old age. "For though, for the present time, I should

[1] II Machabees vi, 18.
[2] II Machabees vi, 19.
[3] II Machabees vi, 24.

be delivered from the punishments of men," [1] he said, "I would not escape, either living or dead, the hand of the Almighty God."

Having thus spoken, the aged, holy man was dragged to the place of execution, where he suffered a glorious martyrdom. In the midst of his last agonizing torments, he cried out, "O Lord,—I suffer grievous pains in body, but in soul am well content to suffer these things because I fear Thee." [2]

"Thus did this man die, leaving not only to young men, but also to the whole nation, the memory of his death for an example of virtue and fortitude." [3]

"Grant Thy people, we beseech Thee, O Lord, to shun all that is of the evil one, and with pure hearts to follow Thee, the only God." [4]

1II Machabees vi, 26.
2II Machabees vi, 30.
3II Machabees vi, 31.
4Prayer in the Mass.

EIGHTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

THOUGHTS.

"At that time, Jesus entering into a ship, passed over the water and came into His own city. And behold they brought to Him one sick of the palsy lying in a bed; and Jesus seeing their faith, said to the man sick of the palsy, Be of good heart, son, thy sins are forgiven thee. And behold some of the scribes said within themselves, He blasphemeth. And Jesus seeing their thoughts said, Why do you think evil in your hearts? Whether is it easier to say, Thy sins are forgiven thee; or to say, Arise and walk? But that you may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins (then said He to the man sick of the palsy), Arise, take up thy bed, and go into thy house. And he arose, and went into his house. And the multitude seeing it, feared and glorified God Who had given such power to men." Matthew ix, 1-8.

AFTER the paralytic mentioned in today's Gospel rose from his bed, after he had been cured from the bodily ailment with which for a long time he had been afflicted, after he had also been sanctified in soul by Christ's soothing words of pardon, the malicious scribes who were present came to the conclusion that the Lord was a blasphemer. Christ read their secret thoughts, and to the utter confusion of the scribes He gave them their answer. They were startled to find that Christ knew the innermost thoughts of their minds. They were fearful and embarrassed at His knowledge.

The fear and the embarrassment of the scribes, however, constitutes a very salutary lesson for us. This incident makes us realize that Christ always knows the kind of a life which we are leading. It proves to us that we are always in the

presence of an infinite Judge to Whom there is no such thing as a secret thought. We may be successful in concealing our thoughts from our associates and even from our most intimate friends. We are truly the proud and exclusive guardians of our own minds, and no power in the world can force us to open the closed portals of our souls. To God, however, all our thoughts and longings are perfectly clear. He knows our impulses, our recollections, our suspicions, our fears, our petty jealousies. "For His eyes are upon the ways of men, and He considereth all their steps." [1] "The Lord searcheth all hearts, and understandeth all the thoughts of minds." [2]

The royal Psalmist sings of the glory of this divine wisdom. "Lord, Thou hast proved me, and known me. Thou hast understood my thoughts afar off. Thou hast foreseen all my ways. Behold, O Lord, Thou hast known all things. Thy knowledge is become wonderful to me. Whither shall I go from Thy spirit, or whither shall I flee from Thy face? If I ascend into heaven, Thou art there; if I descend into hell, Thou art present. If I take my wings early in the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there also shall Thy hand lead me. Perhaps darkness shall cover me and night shall be my light in my pleasures. But darkness shall not be dark to Thee, and night shall be as light as the day. The darkness thereof, and the light thereof, are alike to Thee." [3]

We must keep strict watch, therefore, over the sanctuaries of our minds and over the tabernacles of our hearts, lest worldly thoughts and dangerous affections tinge them with contamination. One evil thought voluntarily entertained, one

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[1] Job xxxiv, 21.

[2] Paralipomenon xxviii, 9.

[3] Excerpts from Psalm cxxxviii.

bad desire deliberately elicited, blights the soul with instant death.

Our physical life depends on the heart, and likewise our spiritual life. Christ tells us that "from the heart come forth evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false testimonies, blasphemies. These are the things that defile a man." [1] And, on the other hand, Christ tells us, "Blessed are the clean of heart, for they shall see God." [2]

We may think, perhaps, at times, that the types of thoughts which dwell in the minds of men may be of trifling import, but in the eyes of God they are of tremendous consequence.

* * *

When Solomon became king of Israel on the death of King David, the Lord appeared to him and said that He would grant him any favor that he would ask. This was Solomon's prayer: "O Lord God, Thou hast made Thy servant king instead of David, my father, and I am but a child.—And Thy servant is in the midst of the people which Thou hast chosen, an immense people, which cannot be numbered nor counted for multitude. Give, therefore, to Thy servant an understanding heart, to judge Thy people, and discern between good and evil." [3]

The Lord was pleased with the request of Solomon, and He said to him: "Because thou hast asked this thing, and hast not asked for thyself long life or riches, nor the lives of thy enemies, but hast asked for thyself wisdom to discern judgment, behold I have done for thee according to thy words, and have given thee a wise and understanding heart." [4]

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[1] Matthew xv, 19, 20.
[2] Matthew v, 8.
[3] III Kings iii, 7-9.
[4] III Kings iii, 11, 12.

Let us make the same request of Almighty God. Let us implore the grace to distinguish between good and evil, and also the grace to make always the proper choice.

"In Thy merciful kindness, we beseech Thee, O Lord, to direct our hearts, for without Thee as our guide it is impossible for us to please Thee." [1]

[1] Prayer in the Mass.

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NINETEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

COOPERATION.

"At that time, Jesus spoke to the chief priests and Pharisees in parables, saying: The kingdom of heaven is likened to a king, who made a marriage for his son. And he sent his servants to call them that were invited to the marriage: and they would not come. Again he sent other servants, saying: Tell them that were invited, Behold, I have prepared my dinner, my beeves and fatlings are killed, and all things are ready: come ye to the marriage. But they neglected, and went their ways, one to his farm, and another to his merchandise. And the rest laid hands on his servants, and, having treated them contumeliously, put them to death. But when the king had heard of it, he was angry, and, sending his armies, he destroyed those murderers, and burned their city. Then he saith to his servants: The marriage indeed is ready; but they that were invited were not worthy. Go ye therefore into the highways, and as many as you shall find, call to the marriage. And his servants going forth into the ways, gathered together all that they found, both bad and good: and the marriage was filled with guests. And the king went in to see the guests, and he saw there a man who had not on a wedding garment. And he saith to him: Friend, how camest thou in hither, not having on a wedding garment? But he was silent. Then the king said to the waiters: Bind his hands and feet, and cast him into the exterior darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. For many are called, but few are chosen." Matthew xxii, 2-14.

FROM the day on which Jesus gave to the apostles the divine commission to preach the Gospel, the servants of the King have scurried to all parts of the world, eager to fulfill His directions. In the sparsely settled villages, as well as in the populous cities, the Gospel of peace and good will has been consistently preached. The clarion call

of the apostles of Christ has been sounded in every nation and in every language. It has reached a multitude of souls, the number of which cannot be even approximately estimated.

Many of those who have heard the call have received it with utter indifference. Others have become violently resentful and have risen in anger against God's ministers, and have cruelly persecuted and slain them. Finally there have been those who have accepted the Master's invitation and have entered into the region of light. Then, incredible as it seems, some of these who thus became members of the King's household later cast off the spotless robes of grace which they had received, and yet they still continued to sit at the Master's table.

Their presence in the banquet hall will, however, avail them nothing. They will not be permitted to join the circle of the Master's friends and partake of His supper. Truly, many are called; but, alas, there are few who are chosen!

We Catholics may imagine that we are safe just because we actually belong to the body of His Church. We may delude ourselves into thinking that because we had a good mother, or because we belong to a Christian family, or because we feel an occasional impulse to do a kind act, we are therefore sure of salvation. Nothing is farther from the truth. If we entertain such an idea, we are making a sad mistake.

Initial sanctification is by no means a guarantee of heaven. Possession of graces does not imply the certainty of salvation. Perseverance and cooperation are also essential elements in the accomplishment of our eternal destiny. If we are to win the crown, we must wage a victorious fight. If we are to succeed in keeping immaculate the radiant garments of grace, we must steadfastly repel the allurements of temptation. We must be constantly on the alert. It is not sufficient to be a member of God's household in order to be saved. It is also necessary to

be loyal members and devoted servants. When God comes to reward those of us who have been faithful and to punish those of us who have been bad, He will have no difficulty in discovering the reprobate, even if they are in the company of the elect.

* * *

When the city of Jericho fell into the hands of the Israelites, Josue ordered all the spoils of the enemy to be offered up to the Lord. All of the Israelites with the exception of Achan obeyed this command. Achan, however, was covetous and withheld some silver and gold from the offering, and, as a result of his impiety, the Israelites were defeated. The reason for the defeat, however, was made known by God and Achan's sin was revealed. An awful punishment was visited upon him, and even until this day the place of his execution is pointed out.

Men do not know our secret actions, for it is possible for us to be shrewd enough to deceive the world. The eye of God, however, finds us even though we may be in the company of a multitude of saints. It is necessary for us to wear always a wedding garment so that when the King will come He will bestow on us a crown of glory instead of sentencing us to everlasting doom.

"Almighty and merciful God, in Thy loving kindness, keep us from all things that war against us, that, being unhampered alike in soul and body, we may with free minds perform the works which are Thine." [1]

[1] Prayer in the Mass.

TWENTIETH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

TRIAL.

"At that time, there was a certain ruler whose son was sick at Capharnaum. He having heard that Jesus was come from Judea into Galilee, went to Him, and prayed Him to come down (to Capharnaum) and heal his son; for he was at the point of death. Jesus therefore said to him, Unless you see signs and wonders, you believe not. The ruler saith to Him, Lord, come down before that my son die. Jesus saith to him, Go thy way, thy son liveth. The man believed the word which Jesus said to him, and went his way. And as he was going down, his servants met him, and they brought word, saying, that his son lived. He asked therefore of them the hour wherein he grew better. And they said to him, Yesterday at the seventh hour the fever left him. The father therefore knew that it was at the same hour that Jesus said to him, Thy son liveth; and himself believed, and his whole house." John iv, 46-53.

IF, at the first answer of Jesus, the ruler had lost heart and had stopped praying, the miracle which he desired would not have been performed. Likewise, if the woman of Canaan had been dismayed by the apparent gruff refusal of the Master to restore her daughter to health, her petition would not have been answered. Christ replied that since she was a pagan and He was sent to save the lost sheep of the house of Israel, it would not be right for Him, as He expressed it in figurative language, "to take the bread of the children, and cast it to the dogs." [1] Without a moment's hesitation, the woman replied to the Master, and retaining the same figure of speech which He had used, she said that even

[1] Mark vii, 27.

the dogs may "eat of the crumbs that fall from the tables."[1] "Then Jesus answering, said to her: 'O woman, great is thy faith. Be it done to thee as thou wilt.' And her daughter was cured from that hour."[2]

When we pray, Jesus tries us. If Christ seems to be inattentive and unresponsive, we should remember that we must persevere in our supplications. Every prayer is answered in the way which is best for the soul. There are many who expect that their first prayer should be heard, and when they see that their petition has apparently not been granted, or at least, not in the exact manner which they stipulated, they lose confidence and stop praying. Thus, in the very moment of the trial, while Jesus is considering their virtues, they themselves close the door on His mercy.

We should not be impatient. Before the throne of God, hours or days are not counted. Our concern should be to strive to increase our faith and to persevere in prayer. We may have the utmost confidence that God will hear us. Even the saints have been obliged to wage constant warfare against spiritual dryness, fatigue and discouragement, and yet, eventually, they were supremely triumphant and gloriously rewarded.

During the night of His agony in the garden, with the thoughts of the terrible sufferings which He was to undergo on the morrow vividly before Him and causing Him to sweat blood, Jesus continued to pray to His heavenly Father. Thus are we permitted to learn the lesson of the correct way in which we should pray. When the sky is darkest, the dawn is fast approaching. When farmers go out to sow their seeds in the springtime, they put all their labor and all their hopes into

[1]Matthew xv, 27.
[2]Matthew xv, 28.

the soil. They trust their treasures to the earth, but when these treasures are returned a hundred fold at the time of the harvest they are exultant with happiness. "They that sow in tears shall reap in joy,"[1] are the appropriate words of the Psalmist.

* * *

The apostle Saint Paul, in the last letter which he wrote, the Epistle to the Hebrews, exhorts the newly converted Christians in Palestine to be steadfast in the faith of Christ. This epistle contains Saint Paul's spiritual testament. The words of Christianity's first and greatest convert are just as applicable to us as they were to the early Catholics to whom they were specifically directed. "Do not therefore lose your confidence, which hath a great reward. For patience is necessary for you, that, doing the will of God, you may receive the promise."[2] "Without faith it is impossible to please God. By faith, Noah, having received an answer concerning those things which as yet were not seen, moved with fear, framed the ark for the saving of his house. By faith, he that is called Abraham, obeyed to go out into a place which he was to receive for an inheritance; and he went out, not knowing whither he went. By faith, Abraham, when he was tried, offered Isaac, his only begotten son. By faith, the Israelites passed through the Red Sea as by dry land. By faith, the walls of Jericho fell down. By faith, the patriarchs and the prophets conquered kingdoms, wrought justice, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, recovered strength from weakness, became valiant in battle and put to flight the armies of foreigners. By faith, others were stoned, they were cut

[1]Psalm cxxv, 5.

[2]Hebrews x, 35, 36.

asunder, they were tempted, they were put to death by the sword, they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, being in want, distressed and afflicted." [1]

Let us, therefore, look upon and admire Jesus, "the Author and Finisher of faith, Who having joy set before Him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and now sitteth on the right hand of the throne of God." [2] Let us reflect how patient was Christ, how He endured such opposition from sinners without murmuring, and then we shall not be wearied or discouraged. We have not as yet been obliged to resist sin with our blood. We must persevere, for God treats us as sons, and sons occasionally need correction and guidance from their fathers.

"Be placated with us, O Lord, and grant us, we beseech Thee, Thy faithful children, forgiveness and peace, that being cleansed from all our offences we may serve Thee with a quiet mind." [3]

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[1] Excerpts from Hebrews xi.
[2] Hebrews xii, 2.
[3] Prayer in the Mass.

TWENTY-FIRST SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

CANCELLED DEBTS.

"At that time, Jesus spoke to His disciples this parable: The kingdom of heaven is likened to a king, who would take an account of his servants. And when he had begun to take the account, one was brought to him that owed him ten thousand talents; and as he had not wherewith to pay it, his lord commanded that he should be sold, and his wife and children, and all that he had, and payment to be made. But that servant falling down, besought him, saying, Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. And the lord of that servant, being moved with pity, let him go; and forgave him the debt. But when that servant was gone out, he found one of his fellow-servants that owed him a hundred pence; and laying hold of him, he throttled him, saying, Pay what thou owest. And his fellow-servant falling down besought him, saying, Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. And he would not; but went and cast him into prison till he paid the debt. Now his fellow-servants, seeing what was done, were very much grieved; and they came and told their lord all that was done. Then his lord called him, and saith to him, Thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all the debt, because thou besoughtest me; shouldst not thou then have had compassion also on thy fellow-servant, even as I had compassion on thee? And his lord being angry, delivered him to the torturers until he paid all the debt. So also shall My heavenly Father do to you, if you forgive not every one his brother from your hearts." Matthew xviii, 23-35.

THE servant who throttled his companion because he could not pay him a small sum of money strikes us as a most contemptible character. Just previous to this incident, the servant himself had pleaded for a longer time to pay a much larger sum of money which he owed to his king, and the king had graciously remitted the entire debt. The servant sought and secured a tremendous

favor for himself, but immediately afterwards he was decidedly unwilling to grant a trifling favor to another. The words which his companion used to implore mercy were the very words which he himself had used before the king, but somehow they sounded somewhat different to him now. Surely this is meanness,—a cowardly, cringing beggar towards the man he owed, and a brutal, arrogant harpy towards the man who owed him.

Let us see if there is any vestige of such abominably inconsistent conduct in our own lives. For many years we have been carrying an open active account with God. Our debts consist of sins. Time and time again, we have cast ourselves at the feet of the Master and have begged His forgiveness; and time and time again, we have heard the selfsame response: "Thy sins are forgiven thee."[1] This is the way in which God has acted with us.

Now let us consider how we have acted with our brother, who, perchance, has done us an injury. Let us examine our consciences to see if any of our feelings towards him or our actions in regard to him have been in any way malevolent. For it is certain that if we do not pardon our brother for the offences which he has committed against us, we can hardly expect to have our sins forgiven by God. How, for example, can we recite in the most beautiful of all prayers, the "Our Father",—"forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us"? It will be our own fault if these words which are calculated to secure mercy for us and to raise us to heaven will, instead, bring down to us a sentence of condemnation.

We cannot maintain that it is impossible for us to pardon the injuries which we have sustained from our brother because

[1]Matthew ix, 2.

of their magnitude. No enemy has done us any harm which is at all comparable to the offences which we have committed against God. We have offended an Infinite Being, to Whom we owe life itself and everything else. We have used the very gifts which He in His bounty has bestowed on us, in order to insult Him. We have used the light of vision, the persuasiveness of voice, the strength of arm and the acuteness of intellect, not to thank God, but to outrage Him. And not once or twice have we done wrong by committing faults, but many times and in many ways. And yet God has forgiven us.

With these thoughts in our minds, and with the picture before our eyes of the kind and merciful Saviour, ever ready and ever willing to pardon our sins, why is it that we cannot show the same generosity to others that Christ has displayed towards us? Why can we not forgive the comparatively slight offences of which our brother has been guilty?

* * *

The first book of Kings tells us the story of the noble conduct of David towards Saul. Saul had become possessed of an evil spirit and had sworn to kill David, who was beloved by God. Taking three thousand chosen warriors, Saul marched near to the place where David and a small number of his followers were located. David learned of Saul's approach, and taking two of his followers he went secretly by night to the camp of Saul. The entire camp was in darkness, but David succeeded in finding the tent in which Saul was lying on his couch asleep. The soldiers who were supposed to be acting as sentinels were also asleep. Saul's spear was fixed in the ground near the head of his couch, and one of David's companions said, "God hath shut up thy enemy this day into thy hands; now then, I will run him through with my spear." [1]

[1] I Kings xxvi, 8.

But David answered, " 'Kill him not. But take the spear which is at his head, and the cup of water, and let us go.' No man saw it, or knew it, or awaked, for a deep sleep from the Lord was fallen upon them. And when David had gone over to the other side, and a good space was between them, he cried out: 'Where is the king's spear, and the cup of water which was at his head?' "[1]

At these words, Saul awoke and recognized David's voice. Then he learned that David had spared his life. Saul realized his own injustice, and he acknowledged his sinful intent. He also promised to do David no more harm, and they parted in peace.

David then asked God to be good to him and to spare his life as he had spared the life of Saul. The Lord approved of David's mercy towards Saul. He heard his prayer, and richly rewarded him.

In the courts of eternal justice, mercy is shown only to those who have been merciful themselves.

"In Thy mercy, we beseech Thee, O Lord, to guard Thy household, that by Thy protection, it may be free from all adversities and devoted always to the performance of good works."[2]

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[1]Excerpts from I Kings xxvi.

[2]Prayer in the Mass.

FEAST OF ALL SAINTS.

HOPE.

"At that time, Jesus seeing the multitudes, went up into a mountain; and when He was sat down, His disciples came unto Him. And opening His mouth, He taught them, saying, Blessed are the poor in spirit; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are the meek; for they shall possess the land. Blessed are they that mourn; for they shall be comforted. Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after justice; for they shall have their fill. Blessed are the merciful; for they shall obtain mercy. Blessed are the clean of heart; for they shall see God. Blessed are the peacemakers; for they shall be called the children of God. Blessed are they that suffer persecution for justice sake; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye when they shall revile you, and persecute you, and speak all that is evil against you, untruly, for My sake: be glad and rejoice, for your reward is very great in heaven." Matthew v, 1-12.

TODAY the Church celebrates the Feast of All Saints. While the world is engrossed in search of a happiness which is every day becoming more illusory, the Church is actually finding her happiness in the contemplation of the destiny of her saints. The Church knows that her children on earth are still in exile, but she rejoices in the fact that many of them are living lives that presage a reunion with her saintly children who have gone before them. The saints have happily concluded the period of their trial. Their pilgrimage is over and they have been numbered with the elect.

Saint Augustine tells us that our true country is heaven, the great country of God. Christ is enthroned in glory there and is seated at the right hand of His Father. Before Him,

grouped in adoring myriads, are all those who have been faithful to Him during their lifetime and who are now privileged to enjoy eternally the everlasting possession of God Himself.

The saints, our brothers, are calling out for us to join them. They are stretching out their arms towards us to help us. They are pointing out the luminous pathway over which we must advance. They are serving as our inspiration and our example. They are asking us to fix our gaze on the heavens, in which every moment new stars are blossoming. Some day, our places will be there. The hour of our triumph approaches.

In the light of this meditation on the place of the saints in glory, the thought of the Feast of the Commemoration of the Faithful Departed, which the Church observes tomorrow, will not affect us with sorrow. Our loved ones have descended into the grave comforted by the reassuring words of Christ and, therefore, our remembrance of them will be a prayer of faith and of sweet charity. Our dear ones have passed from life to life, and even though they may be atoning for the punishment due to their sins, they are, nevertheless, at the very portals of Paradise.

The blessed in heaven, the suffering souls in purgatory, and the sufferers and pilgrims on earth form one great family, one and the same great church. Soon they will all be united. Then will be realized our great desire, for we shall then, in very truth, possess the kingdom of God prepared for us since the foundation of the world.

* * *

The prophet Ezechiel had a vision of the last great day. He was transported in spirit to a place of silence and of death. As far as his eyes could reach, he saw numberless skeletons lying on the plain before him. And Ezechiel heard these words

of the Lord: "Prophesy concerning these bones, and say to them, 'Ye dry bones, hear the word of the Lord!'"[1] Ezechiel did as God commanded, and as he prophesied there was a noise and a commotion of bones coming together, and he saw sinews, and flesh and skin come upon them; and a spirit came into them and they lived; "and they stood up upon their feet, an exceeding great army."[2] And the Lord explained that this vision was a sign of the deliverance of the Jewish people from exile, for God was to liberate them from captivity, He was to free them from the tomb. This vision of Ezechiel foreshadowed the deliverance of the Jewish people from bondage, and it also pre-figured the resurrection of the elect and their entrance into glory.

"O almighty and eternal God, Who hath vouchsafed to permit us to venerate Thy saints in one solemnity, grant us, we beseech Thee, through the multitude of our intercessors, the abundance of mercy which we require."[3]

[1]Ezechiel xxxvii, 4.
[2]Ezechiel xxxvii, 10.
[3]Prayer in the Mass.

TWENTY-SECOND SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

CHURCH AND STATE.

"At that time, the Pharisees went and consulted among themselves how to ensnare Jesus in His speech. And they sent to Him their disciples, with the Herodians, saying, Master, we know that Thou art a true speaker, and teachest the way of God in truth, neither carest Thou for any man, for Thou dost not regard the person of men. Tell us therefore, what dost Thou think? Is it lawful to give tribute to Caesar, or not? But Jesus knowing their wickedness, said, Why do you tempt Me, ye hypocrites? Show Me the coin of the tribute. And they offered Him a penny. And Jesus saith to them, Whose image and superscription is this? They say to Him, Caesar's. Then He saith to them. Render therefore to Caesar, the things that are Caesar's, and to God, the things that are God's." Matthew xxii, 15-21.

WHEN Christ looked at the glistening coin of the tribute in the hand of the Pharisee, He saw engraved upon it the cruel features of the profile of Tiberius. The pages of history tell the story of few monarchs who have been more inhuman than was this imperial tyrant, and yet Christ did not deny even to Tiberius the rights which were due to him as the ruler of the Roman Empire. Following the example of Christ, the children of the Church have ever rendered lawful obedience to the heads of their respective governments. Ever have they felt obliged in conscience to be loyal to the country of which they were citizens. Ever have they been faithful in allegiance to their country's flag and in support of the principles for which it stood.

This lesson of obedience to lawfully constituted authority is clearly stated in the words of Saint Paul. He emphasizes

the importance of appreciating that the source of all authority is God. "Render therefore to all men their dues; tribute, to whom tribute is due; custom, to whom custom; fear, to whom fear; honor, to whom honor."[1]

Thus must we show respect to those who occupy positions of authority, for even if our rulers do not chance to be men whom we can esteem as private individuals, we can, nevertheless, honor them for the positions which they hold. So precious are the advantages which accrue to us from this procedure, that every act of ours for the benefit of the State is considered by the Church to be not a gift from us, but a restitution by us. Wherefore Christ does not say, "Give to Caesar," He says, "Render to Caesar," which means, "Restore to Caesar." Christ also says, however, "Render to God the things which are God's."

It has occurred in the history of the world that there have been kings and governments who have abused their powers. They have even legislated against God Himself, against Him Who gave them their authority. In the name of civilization, and in the name of progress and of science, Christ has been proscribed. His teachings have been ridiculed as fantastic dreams; His religion has been denounced as a fraud.

To these usurpations of authority and to these impieties, the Church, which respects Caesar for the love of God, cannot, of course, submit. She incites her children to no revolution, but she, nevertheless, resists. She opposes the nefarious deeds of those who hate her, not with forces of armed warriors, but with the phalanxes of her martyrs. She is unyielding in her stand for righteousness and her children know that God is the great King. "First we fear God," wrote Saint Peter during the reign of the Emperor Nero, "and then we honor the king."

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[1]Romans xiii, 7.

Woe to such governments! It is not the Christians that are bringing them to ruin. It is the impious rulers themselves, who by their overt acts against Almighty God have taught the people the way to rebellion and have thus dug out the yawning abyss into which they would traitorously hurl their countries.

* * *

Achab was the most abominable of Israel's kings. He practised idolatry and honored those who had recourse to the idols he adored. Before declaring war on Syria, he asked the false prophets whom he had assembled about his throne if it would be propitious for him to wage this war. The prophets with one accord predicted success. Then Josaphat, Achab's ally, asked if there were not available some prophet of the Lord who might also be consulted. Achab replied that there was one man left, Micheas, "but I hate him," said Achab, "for he doth not prophesy good to me, but evil." [1] The wish of Josaphat prevailed, however, and a messenger was sent to bring Micheas into the presence of the king. This messenger suggested to him the desirability of concurring with the false prophets in predicting success for Achab. Micheas spurned the suggestion and said, "Whatsoever the Lord shall say to me, that will I speak." [2]

Thus did Micheas answer the request of Achab: "Hear thou therefore the word of the Lord. I saw the Lord sitting on His throne, and all the army of heaven standing by Him on the right hand and on the left. And the Lord said, 'Who shall deceive Achab, king of Israel, that he may go up, and fall at Ramoth Galaad?'—Therefore behold the Lord hath given a lying spirit in the mouth of all thy prophets that are here, and the Lord hath spoken evil against thee." [3]

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[1] III Kings xxii, 8.
[2] III Kings xxii, 14.
[3] III Kings xxii, 19-23.

Achab was hot with anger against Micheas and he maltreated him and cast him into prison to await his return from the war. Then Achab disguised himself and they went into battle. "And a certain man bent his bow, shooting at a venture, and chanced to strike the king of Israel—and he died in the evening." [1]

The governments which exalt vicious and impious leaders in order to deceive and misrule the people will end by being cheated themselves. God does not need to strike them. It is enough for Him to wait. They are infallible agents of their own destruction.

"O God, our refuge and our strength, harken to the devout supplications of Thy Church, and grant that what we seek in faith we may efficaciously obtain." [2]

[1] III Kings xxii, 34, 35.
[2] Prayer in the Mass.

TWENTY-THIRD SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

SLEEP.

"At that time, as Jesus was speaking to the multitudes, behold a certain ruler came up, and adored Him, saying, Lord, my daughter is even now dead; but come lay Thy hand upon her, and she shall live. And Jesus, rising up, followed him with His disciples. And behold a woman, who was troubled with an issue of blood twelve years, came behind Him, and touched the hem of His garment. For she said within herself, If I shall touch only His garment, I shall be healed. But Jesus turning and seeing her, said, Be of good heart, daughter, thy faith hath made thee whole. And the woman was made whole from that hour. And when Jesus was come into the house of the ruler, and saw the minstrels and the multitude making a tumult, He said, Give place, for the girl is not dead, but sleepeth. And they laughed Him to scorn. And when the multitude was put forth, He went in, and took her by the hand. And the maid arose. And the fame hereof went abroad into all that country." Matthew ix, 18-26.

TWO great miracles are described in today's Gospel. The first one tells the story of a woman who had been a sufferer for many years, a woman whose faith in Christ was so great that she believed that the mere touching of the Master's garment would be sufficient to cure her. And so she mingled with the crowd, and finally succeeded in gratifying her desire. In the silent depths of her heart, she cried out to Jesus to bestow on her the blessing of health, and the Saviour answered her prayer.

The second miracle consisted in the restoration to life of the daughter of one of Israel's rulers. Yielding to the

prayers and entreaties of Jairus, the father of the child, Jesus approached and took the girl by the hand, and life coursed back in her veins.

This young maiden's condition symbolizes the state of a soul that is spiritually dead. She could not call Jesus herself. She could not desire His presence. She was dead. And thus it is also with sinners. They are dead to the needs of their souls. They do not pray, and, what is worse, they do not even advert to the necessity of praying. They do not realize their pitiable plight. They do not hear the voice of the gentle Jesus inviting them to return to their Father's house. The thought of God and of their ultimate end does not concern them at all.

Meanwhile, with inexorable advances, the period of their probation hastens to its close. "We are," says Saint Ambrose, "as travelers on the ocean; even if we are sleeping, even if we do not think so, we are, nevertheless, drawing nearer to the harbor." Wherefore is it written, "O thou who sleepest, awake!" Let not the night overtake us while we are still on our journey. Let not our days be used up without making progress in virtue. The years are passing quickly, and great portions of our lives are gone forever. We have seen green fields, whispering forests, and the clear and sparkling waters of many streams. We have paused some moments to contemplate their beauty and to meditate on nature's grandeur, but even as we paused, the courses of our lives refused to linger, and rushed steadily onwards to the end. We have wandered in rocky places, through darkness, and in the midst of dangers. We have been assailed by various fears. But even these disturbances have passed, and only the vaguest memory of them remains. And this is life. The pleasant experiences pass on as do also those which distress us.

We must keep our gaze continuously fixed on the journey's end, the journey's end which is death. If we feel that we are

separated from the friendship of the Saviour, if we are indifferent to His inspirations, cold to His advances, unresponsive to His pleadings, we should implore from others the assistance of their prayers.

* * *

When Absalom, the son of King David, returned from exile, he had no joy; for the king had said, " 'Let him return into his house, and let him not see my face.' So Absalom returned into his house, and saw not the king's face." [1] Absalom's sin had been so great that the king, his own father, did not intend to forgive him.

Now in all Israel "there was not a man so comely and so exceedingly beautiful as Absalom; from the sole of the foot to the crown of his head there was no blemish in him." [2] Absalom had three sons and one beautiful daughter and he "dwelt two years in Jerusalem and saw not the king's face." [3] But Absalom was not happy, because he could not see the king, his father. Finally, he was able to withstand this anguish of heart and soul no longer, and he besought Joab, the minister of the king, to intercede for him, saying that it were better for him to have remained in exile or to be killed than to be obliged to endure this terrible living martyrdom of separation. Holy Scripture then relates in simple and sublime language the story of the pardon in one verse: "So Joab going in to the king, told him all: and Absalom was called for, and he went in to the king: and prostrated himself on the ground before him: and the king kissed Absalom." [4]

The most terrible affliction of souls that are groping in the darkness is separation from their King and from their

[1] II Kings xiv, 24.
[2] II Kings xiv, 25.
[3] II Kings xiv, 28.
[4] II Kings xiv, 33.

Father. May these souls be inflamed once more with the fervent desire to see the light of their Father's home, and to contemplate again the striking beauty of His welcoming smile! May they earnestly long to hear the gentle accents of that voice which alone is able to summon them from the sleep of death!

The Church today takes the place of Jairus, the father of the dead girl, and prays to the Divine Master to return her children to life,—"Remit, we beseech Thee, O Lord, the sins of Thy people, that by Thy mercy we may be freed from the bonds of our sins with which through frailty we have become shackled."[1]

[1] Prayer in the Mass.

TWENTY-FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

SIMPLICITY.

"At that time, Jesus spoke to the multitude this parable: The kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard-seed, which a man took and sowed in his field: which is the least indeed of all seeds: but when it is grown up, it is greater than all herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come and dwell in the branches thereof. Another parable He spoke to them: The kingdom of heaven is like to leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal, until the whole was leavened. All these things Jesus spoke in parables to the multitudes: and without parables He did not speak to them, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying: I will open My mouth in parables, I will utter things hidden from the foundation of the world." Matthew xiii, 31-35. (Gospel of Sixth Sunday after Epiphany.)

THE small grain of mustard-seed, to which the Lord refers in this Gospel, is the preaching of the word of God. When the apostles announced to the world the doctrine of Jesus Christ, true God and true Man, when they proclaimed the scandal of the cross and told the story of the resurrection, their testimony was not credited. Their work in evangelizing the world had, indeed, the most humble beginnings.

Saint Jerome asks us to contrast the circumstances surrounding the birth of Christianity with the inauguration of other movements sponsored by reputedly great philosophers. He points out the difference between the rough sincerity of the apostles and the cultured manner of the rhetoricians. He explains that the Church began as a little seed and gradually

took deep root and developed into a giant tree whose rugged branches eventually reached to all parts of the world. He calls attention to the fact that, on the other hand, the man-made systems sponsored by the philosophers grew rapidly like weeds and stalks which quickly wilt, die, and make room for the growth of other things.

Every one of us is a witness to the salutary power of the word of God. It is capable of inspiring an ordinary individual to the performance of extraordinary deeds. It gives strength to weak human beings, enabling them to carry on heroically and to successful issue most dangerous and difficult tasks. Although it is possible to derive much good and to receive great pleasure from the perusal of the works of talented authors and gifted poets, their words have no effect on the soul which is at all comparable to the powerful, penetrating and ennobling influence of God's holy word. "It is like to leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened." [1]

If, therefore, despite our littleness, we wish to be great in virtue and accomplish results which will redound to the greater glory of God and of His Church, we should listen with humility to the words of life contained in the Gospel, and strive with all sincerity to put the lessons which they teach into practice.

* * *

When David came to die, he repeated the words of praise which he had sung to God at the time of his victories. "The Lord is my Rock, and my Strength, and my Saviour." [2] "He delivered me from my most mighty enemy, and from them that hated me; for they were too strong for me." [3]

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[1] Luke xiii, 21.
[2] II Kings xxii, 2.
[3] II Kings xxii, 18.

King David spoke also of the glory of those who with respectful fear listen to the word of God and faithfully observe its teachings. They will be "as the light of the morning, when the sun riseth, and shineth without clouds." [1] And, on the other hand, the "transgressors shall all of them be plucked up as thorns," [2] and cast into the fire.

The last chapter of the first book of Paralipomenon which means etymologically a supplement, because it contains things which were omitted from the books of the Kings, tells us in great detail of the last prayers of King David. "Blessed art Thou, O Lord the God of Israel, our Father from eternity to eternity!" [3] exclaimed the king. "Thine, O Lord, is magnificence, and power, and glory, and victory! To Thee is praise, for all that is in heaven and in earth is Thine! Thine are riches, and Thine is glory! Thou hast dominion over all!" [4] "I know, my God, that Thou provest hearts, and lovest simplicity. Wherefore, I also in the simplicity of my heart have joyfully offered all these things." [5] And I pray Thee to "give to Solomon, my son, a perfect heart, that he may keep Thy commandments, Thy testimonies, and Thy ceremonies."—"And David commanded all the assembly, 'Bless ye the Lord our God!' And all the assembly blessed the Lord, the God of their fathers; and they bowed themselves and worshipped God." [6]

"Grant, we beseech Thee, Almighty God, that ever fixing our thoughts on reasonable things, we may both in word and deed do what is pleasing to Thee." [7]

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[1] II Kings xxiii, 4.
[2] II Kings xxiii, 6.
[3] I Paralipomenon xxix, 10.
[4] I Paralipomenon xxix, 11, 12.
[5] I Paralipomenon xxix, 17.
[6] I Paralipomenon xxix, 19, 20.
[7] Prayer in the Mass.

LAST SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

THE END.

"At that time, Jesus said to His disciples, When you shall see the abomination of desolation, which was spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place, he that readeth let him understand: then they that are in Judea, let them flee to the mountains; and he that is on the housetop, let him not come down to take anything out of his house; and he that is in the field, let him not go back to take his coat. And woe to them that are with child, and that give suck, in those days. But pray that your flight be not in the winter, or on the Sabbath (because the law forbade traveling on the Sabbath): for there shall be then great tribulation, such as has not been found from the beginning of the world until now, neither shall be: and unless those days had been shortened, no flesh should be saved; but for the sake of the elect, those days shall be shortened. Then if any man shall say to you, Lo, here is Christ, or there, do not believe him. For there shall arise false Christs and false prophets; and shall show great signs and wonders, insomuch as to deceive (if possible) even the elect. Behold, I have told it to you beforehand; if they therefore shall say to you, Behold, He is in the desert, go ye not out; behold, He is in the closets, believe it not. For as lightning cometh out of the east, and appeareth even unto the west, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. Wheresoever the body shall be, there shall the eagles also be gathered together. And immediately after the tribulation of those days, the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of heaven shall be moved; and then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven, and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with much power and majesty; and He shall send His angels with a trumpet and a great voice and they shall gather together His elect from the four winds, from the farthest parts

of the heavens to the utmost bounds of them. And from the fig-tree learn a parable: when the branch thereof is now tender, and the leaves come forth, you know that summer is nigh. So you also, when you shall see all these things, know ye that it is nigh even at the doors. Amen I say to you, that this generation shall not pass till all these things be done. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My words shall not pass away." Matthew xxiv, 15-35.

WE are hurrying on to the end. As the wise woman of Thecua said to the king, "We all die, and like waters that return no more, we fall down into the earth." [1]

There is not a single exception. It is true that the soul of man is eternal, but the flesh with which he is clothed is perishable and perishing. It wears out just the same as do his garments. Great or insignificant, young or old, all are moving inevitably towards the same destination.

It is impossible for any of us to begin our journey again. We can never retrace the steps which we have already taken. It may be years, or it may be only days, but surely sometime we shall be obliged to answer the beckoning call of Death's angel. "All flesh is grass," says the prophet Isaias, "and all the glory thereof as the flower of the field. The grass is withered, and the flower is fallen." [2]

Even pagans appreciate the fact that one day they must die. The words of Seneca elaborating this thought are worthy of consideration. "On the very day of our entrance into life," he observes, "we enter into the roadway which terminates in death." As we add to the years of childhood and of youth, we should remember that we are really subtracting these years from the terms of our life. We are mistaken if we imagine that it is only those who are old who are drawing nearer to

[1] II Kings xiv, 14.
[2] Isaias xl, 6, 7.

the grave. We are all of us, whether we are young or whether we are old, in exactly the same situation.

And just in the same way that men are mortal and rapidly succumb to the ravages of time, so also are all other earthly beings subject to the influences of decay. Even the sheer, perennially ice-coated, man-defying crest of Everest shall one day melt into annihilation. "The day of the Lord shall come as a thief, in which the heavens shall pass away with great violence, and the elements shall be melted with heat, and the earth and the works which are in it shall be burnt up." [1]

When, therefore, one whom we love is called by death, we should remember that he is but solving the debt of nature which all of us in turn must one day pay. During the last sad moments, we group about our loved one's bedside. We bid him a fond farewell with the same affectionate hopes in our bosoms that we have when we say good-bye to dear ones who leave home to sail upon the sea to foreign lands.

Our hearts are full of the same yearnings for the sound of the voice that we hope to hear some day inviting us also to embark upon the great ocean of eternity and journey to the promised land. "I say farewell to you now," sobbed Saint Ambrose to his dying brother. "I bid you a last good-bye. But you are preceding me by only a little while. You are the first to enter the house of our Father, which will be now even more so than before my longed for dwelling-place."

* * *

When David had quelled the revolt of Absalom, and Absalom himself had been slain, the king refused to be comforted and mourned for his ungrateful son for many days. Yielding finally to remonstrances, David ceased to weep and decided to return to Jerusalem. When he arrived at the river Jordan, he

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[1] II St. Peter iii, 10.

found Berzellai, the Galaadite, waiting at the river to assist him. Berzellai had been the friend of David and had supplied the king with food during his encampment. The king wished to show his gratitude and his good will to Berzellai and he invited him to come with him to Jerusalem. Berzellai replied that he was eighty years old and would no longer enjoy the journey. His senses could not now discern the sweet from the bitter. "I beseech thee," he continued, "let thy servant return, and die in my own city, and be buried by the sepulchre of my father, and of my mother." [1] David acceded to the wish of Berzellai. He did not press his invitation, and with tears in their eyes they bade each other farewell.

The one who keeps before his mind the thought of this end of all things has little difficulty in adjusting himself to the possession of few things during life. The pleasures of the world and the things that money can buy, the troubles of the world and the anguish which poverty means, all pass away and we pass also with them.

"Be propitious, O Lord, to our supplications, and accept the offerings and prayers of Thy people. Turn all our hearts unto Thee, that, being delivered from earthly appetites, we may pass on to the enjoyments of heaven." [2]

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[1] II Kings xix, 37.

[2] Prayer after Offertory in the Mass.

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